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Those Perplexing Argentines

Those Perplexing Argentines

By
James Bruce



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THOSE PERPLEXING ARGENTINES

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JAMES BRUCE

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To Ellen

*who accompanied me on all my trips
in Argentina and found much pleasure
in the country and its people*

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JAN 26 1954

Foreword

NO OTHER COUNTRY in Latin America is more important to the United States today than Argentina.

Of all the republics of the Americas, none has been more of a constant source of difficulty—and at the same time, held more of our hopes for the future.

Yet the fact is that we probably know less of the Argentine people, the things that make them what they are, and why they think, act, and behave as they do, than we know of the peoples of most of the countries of Europe. Or, if it need be said, of many other parts of the world.

Because Argentina is the key to much of what lies ahead in our Western Hemisphere, this book has been written. Over a period of some years I have observed the people and events of Argentina on many levels. This has extended from close relationship with many government leaders and officials as well as with men and women of every social, political, and economic background, from the owners of the great cattle-raising *estancias* to the dirt farmers on whose land I have hunted.

My friends, associates, and I have all disagreed from time to time about political activities in this perplexing country. But we have all shared the same feelings and deep affection for its people. I have flown tens of thousands of miles over all parts of the Argentine republic: the tropical jungles bordering Brazil; the Andes and its foothills, the broad expanse of the pampa; twice to lower Patagonia, the Straits of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego; never over Cape Horn but within sight of it, and to the great cities as well as the interior of the rich and beautiful land to which I had been accredited.

The aim of this book is not, however, to serve as a memoir or a survey of the ever-changing political situation. That field has been covered from every viewpoint. Rather, it is to present a picture of the Argentine people, their collective personality, as it were. There has been no desire to point a finger at faults or foibles, though these naturally emerge, or to say that our way is better and their way worse. No programs of action are urged, no indictments issued. Rather, this is an attempt to help explain what the Argentines are like, the kind of growing pains they have gone through and how and why they are what they are today. By the same token, it may also indicate what they may be expected to do tomorrow—the *mañana* of which all Latin Americans speak.

It is essential that these things be understood, for few Latin American republics affect us so strongly politically, economically, and militarily. Argentina's riches, possessions, political and economic power, her leaders and development, have all given her a unique position. She has been a source of food for Britain and much of western Europe, as well as the key supplier of many of the free world's raw materials.

And even though our dependence on Latin American markets and sources can be generally said to decrease as we move southward from the United States—and Europe's dependence and importance to Latin America to increase proportionately—Argentina today has never been more vital to us. Her constantly changing role vis-à-vis the Soviet Union affects our whole defense picture, both because of Argentina's own geographic and political position and because of her influence on her Latin American neighbors. Argentina's role with the Latin bloc in

the United Nations has also become more and more decisive as we have come to realize that Latin America's votes can—and have—often meant a difference between passage and disapproval of many of the measures that concern us so deeply.

No other Latin republic has been so reluctant to ratify conventions or to adopt measures that we in the United States have been anxious to see approved. It is the Argentines who have spoken up most often and most loudly at Inter-American sessions. And generally the impression has been created that each time an Argentine succeeds in opposing us, somehow he has scored a victory for himself and for Latin America.

But the fact that the Argentine government and its leaders are distinct from the Argentine people and frequently in disagreement is becoming increasingly clear to many in the United States. Events in recent years have emphasized this even more.

Yet it is hard for most North Americans to understand the difference between the two—and to determine where government and people agree and where they do not.

This book will attempt to answer some of these questions frankly, realistically, honestly, in terms of people rather than of products, and in terms of the personality of a nation fully as much as in political events. In a situation as fluid as that which has existed in Argentina since the military took over exactly ten years ago today, it is inevitable that some of the points made in these pages will have changed and others become more sharply emphasized. Argentina's growing economic crisis—with black markets, meatless days, spiraling inflation, and rising unemployment, plus a growth of communist activity

—erupted in a violent series of events, including the destruction of the famed Jockey Club in April, 1953. Other events are sure to take place, for no one can accurately forecast just what will happen on the Rio de la Plata.

Some of these points have been covered in this work, but this book, it must be emphasized, is not intended as a critical study in this field. Rather, its aim is to help explain, fully, completely, and with candor, those factors that make the Argentine people tick. This includes many things usually left unspoken or concealed because of a refusal to look squarely at the facts, as well as because of lack of knowledge. And often this has meant simply an avoidance of the kind of honesty Good Neighbors must have with one another.

Those of us who have known many Argentines for long periods of time—lived with them, worked with them, and enjoyed their sports and amusements, their books and fiestas—have not let this affection blind them from looking closely. Not everyone will agree with everything said here. That is expected. And, of necessity, much of what follows must be purely interpretive, based not on documents or statistical studies, but on less scientific research, analysis, and interpretation.

Perhaps the greatest hope one can express is that as an Argentine who read the manuscript put it: "A really honest look at one another may enable us to understand each other's viewpoints more than all the pious statements we have heard for so many years."

New York City
June 4, 1953

JAMES BRUCE

Acknowledgment

ONE DAY in 1947, not long after I arrived in Buenos Aires as United States Ambassador to Argentina, I had a call from a traveling correspondent bearing a letter of introduction. The note was highly commendatory in its description—but what its writer told me in his own incisive way, I had, in the interim, discovered in the pages of my caller's book, *Argentine Diary*, for in Ray Josephs' volume and in his dispatches to leading United States newspapers and magazines, he had established a mark as a correspondent with a remarkable grasp of Latin America.

In our discussions about Argentina and Latin America in the years since, complementary experiences have been exchanged and the vantage points of an ambassador and a roving correspondent produced a mutual admiration for the people of the Argentine and a conviction that the North Americans need to know the South Americans better. From these discussions came the impetus for this work.

And for it, Ray Josephs has made available his seasoned research in the field—a fund of published and unpublished source material—and has given of his unsparing professional aid in every phase of its writing and editing.

The “without whose help” phrase in book acknowledgments has become so much a cliché that today only the first words need to be mentioned to produce a chuckle. Nevertheless, no preface to *Those Perplexing Argentines* would be complete without my publicly expressing my deepest appreciation for Ray Josephs' generous and unstinting assistance.

JAMES BRUCE

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
I	Those Perplexing Argentines	1
II	Meet Some Argentines	40
III	The Middle Class Is Argentina***	58
IV	How the Argentines Live	65
V	The Capital of the Argentine	80
VI	The Cities beyond the Capital	89
VII	Where the Argentines Come From	98
VIII	This Is the Land	117
IX	The Owners of the Land	125
X	The Workers of the Land	133
XI	The Gaucho Tradition	139
XII	The Argentine Worker	147
XIII	The Family Is Everything	161
XIV	The Church Is Everywhere	173
XV	How the Argentines Are Educated	189
XVI	What the Argentines Read	202
XVII	How Argentines Amuse Themselves	212
XVIII	Meat and Wheat Make Argentina	235
XIX	Industries of Argentina	244
XX	The Argentine and His Government	264
XXI	Politics and the Spoils System	277
XXII	The Argentines and Their Army	300
XXIII	The Argentines and Their Neighbors	314
XXIV	The United States and the Argentine	332
	Index	351

Those Perplexing Argentines

Chapter I

Those Perplexing Argentines

THE AVERAGE North American, trying to conjure up some sort of realistic picture of the average Argentine, is more often than not likely to think of a romantic gaucho in a black sombrero, galloping over the *pampa* by day and serenading a lovely dark-haired *señorita* by night.

Or he may visualize a dashing polo player who travels around with a string of fleet ponies, frequenting the better after-dark gathering places of Paris and Manhattan, and dancing the tango.

To a somewhat lesser extent, the average Argentine, visualizing his North American brother, has a similarly distorted viewpoint.

The fact is that although many books, articles, and editorials about Argentina's politics, meat and wheat, and international relations have appeared in our press in

recent years—so that the once-prevalent charge that we are little interested in what happens there can no longer be made—rarely have we in North America sought to understand the people behind the headlines from Buenos Aires.

Unfortunately, the differences between *Argentino* and *Yanqui* have long been more emphasized than the similarities.

What are these differences? How did they come about? Why is it that though we both come from similar backgrounds, fought not-too-dissimilar wars for independence, and have so many similar characteristics, we don't get along better than we do?

Ask an average Argentine about our differences and he'll probably tell you: "We'll never really get along for our basic conflict is economic."

Yet the fact is that actually we are not economic competitors, though most Argentines *think* we are. And international legends die just as hard as generalizations made on the basis of superficial impressions.

Talk to an Argentine and he will tell you that the United States has always refused to admit the product of which they are proudest, their incomparable meat, because we fear it is both better and lower-priced than ours. In part, as shall be pointed out presently, we did bar their meat and still do, primarily because of the prevalence of foot-and-mouth disease on their vast flat grazing lands. But Argentines in general feel that we have banned all of their products because we feared competition; and to some small extent this has been true.

It makes no difference when you explain that we have always been important purchasers of Argentina's cereals,

wool, hides, and quebracho extract for tanning. You may also explain that though we produce wool we are a big wool importer, that though we produce hides we import them from the Argentine. You can also make clear that the meat question is today academic since Argentina cannot keep her commitments, let alone provide an exportable surplus for the States. Even when you show that our principal exports—cars, refrigerators, machine tools and the like—are, for the most part, not produced in Argentina, the average Argentine is not convinced. It is a significant clue to Argentine character that most Argentines like to believe this competition between us is strong because it automatically ranks them with the United States even if only for argument's sake. It also represents a kind of Argentine national defense mechanism often impossible for North Americans to understand.

Many Argentines see our economic strength as a constant menace to their own vaunted sovereignty and desire for Latin-American leadership. They will insist to you that most *Yanquis* are hard-boiled businessmen, dollar-chasing representatives of soulless corporations. Though they have never personally encountered anyone even remotely resembling this caricature, many believe the picture nevertheless. Some see us as unscrupulous financial promoters or as Hollywood characters who constantly change wives. All too often, they will say, we are good enough at mechanical and technical things. "But," they add, "you lack the culture so vital to full living. We work to enjoy life. You work because you do not know what else to do."

Some North Americans and Argentines enjoy warm personal relationships. They may regard us as *simpático*

individuals. *Simpático* is a word that does not translate exactly, and defining it as warm, likable, and agreeable hardly gives the Argentine flavor. Yet relatively few Argentines really like us, for, despite all the endless series of official speeches, proclamations, and exchanges, it must be conceded that a real warmth between our countries does not exist. Misunderstanding has often occurred over little things, for, though we are fundamentally alike in many ways, our psychological approaches are often different.

Growing up as a nation, we in the United States have begun to get over some of our sensitivity to criticism. The Argentines, being less mature, are still far more likely to resent any real or fancied slight.

We both have the same excessive interest in ourselves—a fact which peoples of other countries are likely to see more sharply than either one of us. We like to discuss ourselves and never tire of being admired.

Most of our ancestors came from Europe. We fought similar wars for our independence and established governments which, regardless of the directions in which they have since moved, were based on the same kind of constitutions. We both enjoy similar temperate zone climates and geography; we both produce many of the same crops.

We both tend to be in a hurry. The Argentines tell us: "You aren't willing to take time out for courtesies or the little gestures we consider so important." Other Latins, however, make almost exactly the same accusation against the Argentines.

We both think we are generally right even if we are not certain exactly where we are going. We are both likely

Britain's prestige began rising from the time the Spanish Armada suffered its famous defeat. In the past century, Argentina was Britain's principal source of meat and wheat. Men and money were needed to protect this vital life and trade line. The City of London, not Wall Street, became the key source of Argentine financing. We were too busy expanding and developing our own country to take any notice.

With every pound invested, more and more Britons crossed the South Atlantic. Some were contract men sent to do specific jobs. Others went to Argentina for lifetime careers, managing utilities, railroads, or retailing establishments. A United States businessman, amazed at seeing a London department store in Buenos Aires, was even more surprised to find the imposing Banco de Londres, Bank of London; *The Standard*, an English daily newspaper, now the accepted dean of the Argentine press; not to mention the British stenographers, clerks, and general managers in the railroad offices, the English shopgirls and English bosses in the department stores, and English superintendents in the packing plants.

Many English settled down permanently, buying land in the province of Buenos Aires and elsewhere on the *pampa*. But they often kept their ties with home and, like the Germans, maintained dual citizenship and traveled with both British and Argentine passports. Many Scottish and Welsh immigrants settled in the sheep-raising country of Southern Patagonia.

The Britons in Argentina introduced their ways and words. The Saturday noon closing hour custom became the *sábado inglés*, English Saturday. An Argentine's word of honor is the *palabra inglés*. When an Argentine wants

brotherly comics as inter-American advocates, it caused a national scandal down there.

Too few Argentines, especially officials, have studied or traveled widely in the United States. Consequently, while many know our history from books, they do not always appreciate our enthusiasm, our impetuosity and our way of doing things. Little attempt was made in the past to close the physical or mental gap between us. Our wooing efforts were often based on the ostentatious approach of showing how good, powerful, and mighty we were, rather than on establishing a mutuality of interest.

Our wartime Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs quickly discovered how this produced anything but the desired results. In order to tell the Argentines something about the States, the Coordinator's Office, early in the war, placed a series of full-page advertisements in many Argentine newspapers inviting Argentines to visit us. They were full of the glories of the United States—the invitation being designed as an indirect way of telling our story.

The Argentines, however, merely regarded this as boasting and decided to boast back. Many turned away from the advertisements convinced that Manhattan was not superior to Buenos Aires, whether in night clubs, opera, or modern buildings. Even though they had never visited America, they were sure their Iguazú Falls were more spectacular than our Niagara, their Nahuel Huapi National Park grander than our Yellowstone, their subways more like art museums than the crowded underground of New York. The campaign brought us no closer. As those who directed it soon learned, the look-what-

wonders-we-have approach, while successful in some Latin American countries, was the worst that could have been tried in Argentina.

Argentines usually judge others by their own standards. Coming from a wealthy nation they, like ourselves, may look down their noses on other, poorer neighbors. Their abundance of physical possessions, their tremendous capital of Buenos Aires and their white racial tradition have given them a highly intensive nationalistic feeling of superiority.

In fact, there is an old saying, frequently cited by other Latins, that one sure way in which to become rich would be to buy an Argentine for what he is really worth—and sell him for what he thinks he's worth. The late Marcelo T. de Alvear, former President of Argentina, once revealingly said:

"Argentines refuse to accept any truth which makes them inferior to anyone else. Theirs is the greatest city in the world, their frontier mountains the highest and their *pampas* the widest; theirs the most beautiful lakes, the best cattle, the richest vineyards, and the loveliest women. They accept no qualifications nor the fact that there might be some other country which surpasses them in anything . . . perhaps it is this overwhelming pride of the Argentines that leads them to believe they can live aloof from any interdependence of nations; that they are self-sufficient without possessing even elementary industries; and that they need have no fear of whatever changes may come."

True or not, many Argentines never forgave Alvear for asserting such things publicly. Recently, Argentina's President Perón, in a step that many felt directly trace-

able to this never-forgotten summation, changed the name of Avenida Alvear in Buenos Aires to that of Argentina's national hero, General José de San Martín. In part, many Argentines believe, this action helped wipe out the sting of Alvear's overly-frank appraisal.

Carl Crow, a world-traveled writer, once remarked that there is one subject of conversation that may be introduced with perfect propriety into any Argentine circle: the greatness of the country, present and prospective. If you do not bring it up yourself, he added, you may be sure someone else will.

Argentines *are* a proud people. They are proud of their wealth, of their vast cattle-raising *estancias*, of their buildings and hospitals, their wheat, beef, and their good wine from Mendoza. They are also proud of themselves. The *peon* working on the docks in Buenos Aires, or in the secondary cities of Rosario or Bahía Blanca, as much as the wealthy *estanciero* in his club feels, this pride.

The Argentine's pride is both an inheritance and a cultivated trait. At times it is a curious manifestation, involving a heavy element of personal vanity. On other occasions, it is easily understood, especially when related to Argentina's truly praiseworthy achievements. Many an Argentine makes a strong display of this pride. Patriotic slogans are highly nationalistic. The blue-and-white colors are everywhere. The theme is always the *grandeza*—the greatness—of the nation. Most Argentines have a zealot's faith in their country's destiny, a belief in Argentina that goes far beyond our most patriotic feeling.

Demonstrations attesting this are held constantly. Adults and school children parade, singing the national

hymns and shouting, "*Viva la Patria*," with furious energy. They want to display their *Argentinidad*, which, as it is taught them from first grade at school, means being Argentine in speech, in thought, in action, and, as much as anything else, properly glorifying their republic's great accomplishments.

Argentina's past heroes are idolized by the government as supermen with perfect ideas. Severe penalties were imposed on newspapers which failed to print the phrase "Year of the Liberator San Martín 1950" on their mastheads. Humanizing stories of the kind that have appeared here about Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson have been rare in Argentina's past and would not be permitted today. Argentines have long been taught to see their history as something wonderful and noble. The emphasis has been on their country's sovereignty and the fact that they are not dependent or beholden to anyone else.

This idea is perhaps not too strange when one considers how long Argentines have felt they were, in a sense, an economic if not a physical colony of stronger nations. Many Argentines believe their country was always a pawn in the world struggle; a source not of power, like the States, but of meat, wheat, and products to feed or serve others.

"If this is so," they have long argued, "why should Argentina choose one side or another?" Hence Argentina's neutrality during World Wars I and II. Hence Perón's current role in advocating for his country a "third position" between what he calls the "equally despised imperialisms of capitalism and Communism."

Even those Argentines who have never conceded the

colony theory have recognized that they are still economically dependent on selling their goods to the rest of the world. Explained a former Cabinet official: "When our products are in demand we can name our own price. When they are not, we can be easily pushed around. Therefore, we Argentines see nothing reprehensible in getting what we can while the getting is good."

This dependence on foreign markets and supplies is one reason Argentines have been forced into their proud patriotism. "It is a kind of showing off in reverse," a prominent Buenos Aires psychologist admitted. "You might call it an attempt to overcome our own basic inferiority complex."

There is little doubt that Argentina has a good deal of justification for her claim to importance. So do we. But self-righteousness is not likely to make nations or nationals any better liked or loved.

Argentina is recognized as the leading nation of Latin America. Although Brazil is larger, more populous, and potentially richer, Argentina has long produced more. She has or long did have more automobiles, miles of railroads, radios, telephones, bank deposits, livestock, manufacturing, higher per capita income and literacy than any other Latin republic. Because of drought she did not lead in agricultural production and exports in 1952, but is expected to regain top position in 1953. And capping all this, there is the dominance, the wealth, the cosmopolitanism of Buenos Aires itself, far and away the continent's first metropolis.

When you remind an Argentine that Brazil's population is three times greater, he is likely, whether pro-Perón or not, to point out that of Brazil's fifty-five millions, pos-

sibly half are completely or partially primitive Indians or Negroes. "Our population," say most Argentines, "is Latin America's largest in the only terms that matter."

Taught the theory of the superiority of the white race, Argentines have long emphasized the lack of any other blood in their veins. As far back as 1920, census statistics were twisted to show this. *Mestizos* with mixed white and Indian blood were often listed as white. Immigration from Negro countries was never permitted, despite the long-time absence of most other immigration bars. Argentines tell you that not only is their country Latin America's whitest, but the hemisphere's. On more than one occasion, Argentines have remarked: "We are the *only* white nation south of Canada."

Argentines tell you there are few Negroes in Argentina; they are almost a rarity. There was a highly popular Cuban night-club pianist, known as *Bola de Nieve*—Snowball—and an American Negro who was a singing waiter-bartender in another well-known Buenos Aires after-dark spot appropriately called "The American Bar." Argentines adored the singing Mills Brothers in much the same way Frenchmen have lionized Negro entertainers. But you see no Negro servants, elevator men, dockhands or taxi drivers. For this reason, the color line is not a conscious point. No hotel, restaurant or night club has any signs or unwritten rules to bar Negroes. There simply are none around the capital.

Argentines have great pride not only in their country but in themselves. Compliment an Argentine and he will not try to convince you that you are flattering him unduly. Instead, he will probably accept it as his natural right—without that depreciating modesty we sometimes

try to convey. Argentines also like to hand out compliments, possibly because they want others in return. More likely, however, the reason lies in their temperament: they enjoy doing things a bit more dramatically than we.

If an Argentine wins a promotion or achieves almost any other triumph, major or minor, he is likely to get more vocal bouquets than a newly-elected governor in the States. His friends usually give him a *homenaje*, a testimonial banquet featuring verbose and flowery speeches. At the end the guest of honor invariably receives an elaborate illuminated parchment scroll duly immortalizing the achievement and destined for his office wall.

Because his country's richness has supported him with such little effort, many an Argentine often expects all, or almost all, from the weather and the land. "*Dios (God) es Argentino*," say the Argentines. His benefactions, they are convinced, prove it—more *pesos* to spend than their Latin neighbors, handsomer homes to live in, better cars to drive, finer schools for their children.

One Argentine physician expressed it this way: "Since so much of our wealth has come from nature, and incidentally come with comparatively little help, we have been willing to accept that which falls our way unthinkingly, regarding it as our natural right. We ride the waves and drift, letting the self-seeking *caudillo*, boss, map the course. Our only reservation is that he not interfere overly much with our pocketbooks, personal dignity, and pleasures. The very abundance of material things—food, drink, the soil of the *pampa*—has made us careless of our liberties."

Many an Argentine admits he and his countrymen

have slipped into the yoke of dictatorial control because President Juan D. Perón is attempting to readjust Argentina's historic maldistribution of wealth. To these Argentines it is of secondary importance that this has meant the strangulation of many of the democratic essentials. Such Argentines see in democracy only the rights it offers, forgetting the duties it imposes.

Early settlers wanted material things rather than freedom. Unlike the French, Argentines have not had to gain their sense of social consciousness in fighting feudalism or foreign powers. Nor have they, like ourselves, fought for democracy and national unity from a need and desire for freedom.

"Our masses," a university professor once said, "have never been forced really to battle for their rights. And the upper economic stratum has wrestled primarily only to keep the status quo of its privilege. This may change—there are signs. But no one can be certain."

Argentines have never had much chance to see democracy in action in their own country. Currently, while Argentines have a form of democracy, they do not enjoy much of its substance. This does not mean democracy is a lost cause. "But," most Argentines admit, "Argentines are not yet ready to fight and die for it."

Just as Argentines have never developed any strong convictions about democracy, so, often for the same reasons, they have not produced a strong national culture. "Our culture," one cynical Argentine once explained, "has been superficial and borrowed, lacking depth: an offshoot of continental Europe."

Argentines are great imitators. But they do not like to feel they are copying anybody. They borrowed their

art from France, their music from Italy, their movies from Hollywood, their gadgets from New York. And the militarists, who currently run the country, did much of their studying in prewar Berlin, Rome, and Madrid.

Just before World War II, José Maria Cantilo, Foreign Minister of Argentina, said:

"We feel ourselves closely associated with Europe by the immigration we have received from her, which has contributed so much to our greatness, our European capital which has developed our agricultural and livestock industries, our railroads and other industries. But even more than that there still lives in our spirit the memory of the men who discovered and populated our land, as well as the cultural tradition they bequeathed us.

"From Spain we received our blood and our religion. From France and Great Britain as well as the United States we received the doctrinal direction of our democratic institutions. If to the Mother country we owe the basis of our literature, French culture has contributed largely in the formation of our intellectual life while Italy and Germany have contributed to important aspects of our evolution. European influence predominates in the higher education of our universities just as European methods are used in our schools."

Most Argentines have always considered France, not Spain, their spiritual home. They used to go to Paris for their ideas, their education, their clothes, and their fun. Some rich Argentines, in fact, even learned French before Spanish. It was regarded as the true mark of one's education. Slavish acceptance of all that came from abroad, in preference to anything produced at home, is no longer the rule. World War II, cutting off both products and

ideas, helped cause the change. Still, while protesting their independence, most Argentines would probably prefer a pair of English shoes or a radio made in the States to a domestic product. Somehow, he would figure, anything made at home is not *quite* as good.

The patriot plays up the nationalistic pride in local production. But many an Argentine confesses: "It is primarily for the working people—Perón's followers." In the best men's shops in Buenos Aires British fabrics will always be preferred to the national. The most expensive ties will be Italian; the best shirts Swiss. Even though they do not carry any imported items, shops often have names like Larry, Jenny, Daisy, Kent. Popular brands of cigarettes include Clifton, Sportsmen, American Club. The foreign name and spelling gives that little extra touch of swank, even though the item is made at home.

But the visiting North American will stock up on locally produced *Industria Argentina* products, for when the Argentine puts his mind to it, he can produce goods as fine as those found anywhere. One reason is that the Argentines undoubtedly have the highest educational level of all Latin Americans. More has been done there to make education available to everyone who wants it than in any other Latin American Republic. Although private schools rated highest, the state's standard education was always, in the past, free for all. This helped produce a keen, alert, literate populace, especially among the *porteños* (dwellers in the port city of Buenos Aires) where education, at all levels and in all forms, was most abundant.

Buenos Aires has always had the most avid and assiduous readers. It is said Argentines buy more books and

support more publishers per capita than almost any other country. Their great publishing industry is currently, with Mexico City, the center for all books published in Spanish—an honor possibly taken from Spain after Franco made ideas dangerous.

Often, it is true, Argentines read superficially, yet they know the literature of all Europe and, increasingly, of the States. Books in French and English are popular. The latter can be traced to the influence of our films and to the number of popular new writers first published in English.

Despite Argentine interest in books, however, few native writers have gained international fame, though it is hard to tell why the most widely translated was the notoriously anti-Semitic Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, who wrote under the pen name of Hugo Wast, and who in 1943 served as Minister of Education under the military government which seized power that year.

Here again, the reason may lie in the lack of motivating struggle and the absence of deep feeling and knowledge essential for truly good writing. Even Argentina's experts on many subjects are not full-time professionals in their field. Rather, they are doctors, lawyers, dentists, businessmen, who, as a hobby, have taken an interest in art, literature, or one of the social sciences. They learn enough to move into the local expert category. Many can write with facility and technical terminology on almost any subject so long as there is not too great a demand for facts. Too often, however, this has not been accompanied by the kind of solid, long-term study which marks the real authority. In many cases, for example, in analyzing books written by Argentines dealing with their own coun-

try, one finds philosophical ramblings and generalized dissertations, rather than hard, well-organized data.

In many instances, the most extensive studies on certain aspects of Argentine life have not been done by Argentines at all. The Argentine—and in general the Latin American—approach to intellectual achievement has the flavor of the romantic countries. It is characterized by the glitter and drama of language itself, by an intoxication with words. Much of this writing is impressive, on first reading. But penetrating studies of Argentina's rural life for instance, such as those made by Dr. Carl Taylor of the United States Department of Agriculture, or economic studies such as those made under the sponsorship of Columbia, the University of California, North Carolina, and of other top United States schools, cannot be found.

Like many another Latin American, the Argentine likes the intellectual fun of knowing, but not the hard digging and spadework. Many Argentines say their population is not large enough to support men of top ability in most full-time research and writing fields. Exceptions are economics, law, and medicine where institutions are able to afford their services and abilities.

When Argentines read their own writers—and others—they are generally on the lookout for what they are certain will be a "catch." Listening to a speech, overhearing a conversation, or being told about some new development, they do not take the words at face value. Instead they try to find a hidden meaning. This applies in both everyday things and international affairs.

"We constantly suspect an ulterior motive because others have used us unfairly in the past," one Argentine

explained. During the most extensive United States goodwill wooing period, for instance, most Argentines were certain we would want something in return for our favors, therefore they ought to be automatically opposed.

Argentines love to be in the know—and they don't have to be shown twice. There is hardly anything which does not interest them—at least for a while. This interest extends to both themselves and the world. Argentines have always been preoccupied with history, especially their own. Practically all leading Argentine writers, politicians, and statesmen have been sometimes historians. Most streets in Argentine cities and towns bear the names of historic personalities or eventful dates—Calle Bernardino Rivadavia, 9 de Julio, 25 de Mayo and scores of others. Practically every Argentine schoolboy can tell you how President Rivadavia established the first National Bank, negotiated the first foreign loan, and founded the national charitable organization known as the Sociedad de Beneficencia. He will tell you how the first *junta* or governing board was established on May 25, after the Revolution of 1810, and exactly why July 9 became Argentina's second Independence Day.

Argentines have also been keenly interested spectators of what goes on in the world. Until recently even their provincial dailies made many of ours look like crossroads bulletins, so extensive was the space devoted to international affairs. The Perón regime, with its concentration on domestic events, has brought local news to page one. Yet despite the attempted shift of focus, Argentines today, as in the past, know more about us than we about them—which has not made them like us any more. Their interest in international affairs has, however, all too often

left them simply spectators. They are concerned with how events may affect prices of their meat and wheat. But otherwise even in contrast with our rank and file citizen, they have generally seen little practical, personal bearing in the world's critical developments. An Argentine ex-minister offered this explanation: "You in the States have been interested because you or your sons and daughters faced the possibility of being involved in war. We never felt we would ever actually have to fight—so it was all, in a sense, academic."

An Argentine Congressional Committee tried to expose Nazi plotting within the Army back in the early days of World War II. Argentines seethed with sudden indignation when they learned what had been done to mold the thinking of their military officers into totalitarian patterns. But they soon lost interest and allowed it to pass with the headlines. After all, they would tell you, the races and the *futbol* (soccer) games were more exciting and the steaks were as good as ever. In a way they felt it stimulating to watch the propagandists of both sides working in Buenos Aires. They enjoyed a spectator's sideline role.

Even when, on June 4, 1943, the Army officers pushed out the civilian government and took over, reaction was far different from what an unknowing outsider might have supposed. For one thing, most Argentines did not consider it a revolution at all. A majority regarded the step only as a *coup d'état*, an overthrow by the palace guard, an officers' movement of "outs" wanting "in." Most Argentines thought that small handful of top Army brass was acting in what it considered its traditional role as the country's protector. The Army, it was believed, was ap-

palled by the increasing flagrant graft and corruption, a new, threatened political steal, and the fear that relations with the Axis might be broken at a time when Berlin had a good chance of ultimate victory.

The fact is that, after the military seizure of power, some of those within the Army turned it to their own ends. They added democratic trappings and constitutional methods to what they did, even though they had little sympathy with such concepts. In a sense this was in keeping with the Argentine tradition of legalizing every illegal step via the proper formula. Yet the mass of population seemed little shocked. From colonial days they had known authoritarian governments.

Often, opposition groups have forced such regimes from power with cries of "reform" and "an end to tyranny." But the facts show that the new government, whether dubbed Liberal or Conservative, often ended up applying even more restrictions on individual freedom of action than before. Perón, for example, enlisted labor's support. He took steps to give those at the bottom of Argentina's economic ladder some of the advantages denied them for generations. This shored up his own position and helped ensure his continued power. But the Argentine people and Perón both knew that the 1943 "revolution" was hardly an authentic one, either in the traditional French or American sense.

This kind of self-deception applies fully as much to the Argentines' sense of honesty. Argentines *are* honest. Their idea of what this means is, however, far different from ours. Argentines have a good record in the payment of international debts and their reputable firms have always been most trustworthy. Cattle have always been

sold by verbal bids. Yet shops, particularly those away from the well-lighted centers of the big cities, consider it imperative to install heavy, iron gates and shutter their windows. There is not much pilfering of tires, radiator caps, windshield wipers, and other automotive equipment frequently stolen in some poorer Latin countries. Yet it is not unknown, particularly in times of scarcities. "Anyone foolish enough to leave something where it can easily be stolen deserves to have it taken away," is the Argentine reaction. "It is one's duty to protect one's own property. The citizen and the law have no obligation to insure."

In every downtown city street, for example, an attendant watches parked cars for a small tip. Even the smallest buildings have custodians; private watchman's agencies are found everywhere.

The small *picardia*, or what might be called native trickery, is part of the basic pattern. Many an Argentine personally adds his restaurant bill to be sure a few extra pesos weren't quietly slipped in when he wasn't watching. Constant vigilance in dealing with one's fellow man is considered the mark of the Argentine city dweller. Ruth and Leonard Greenup, who have looked into the matter, say the *picardia* originated when Spain imposed a heavy tax on everything moving through Buenos Aires in order to maintain Lima and Panama as political and commercial centers. Early *porteños* surreptitiously loaded thousands of tons of tallow and hides onto English and Dutch ships riding at anchor in the Rio de la Plata. Circumventing the Spanish throne was as popular as our Boston Tea Party. Smuggling and bribing became the rule. Succeeding immigrants, especially those from southern European

countries where such customs were generations old, continued these habits.

Many Argentines, in fact, regard rules and regulations as an attempt at intimidation and a reflection on their own personal *dignidad*, or dignity. For decades Argentines refused to stand in line to buy tickets at their theaters and movie houses or to board buses and trolleys. "It's submission against one's personal dignity," they explained. In the last few years they have reluctantly begun lining up. In part the government has forced them into a *fila*, line. In greater measure, it is because they have apparently come to realize that with the country's public transport becoming more chaotic and equipment not being replaced, the long accepted pushing and shoving might eventually break down the whole system at one time. More recently Argentines—to their surprise—have had to line up to buy scarce foods. But the government soon discovered the queues became centers for anti-government talk, and broke them up.

The every-man-for-himself idea still persists at post-offices and sports events. An Argentine considers it his right to shove ahead to the front of the line no matter who may be there first. He feels he would not be showing his proper status as a man if he meekly waited his turn in the back.

This desire to assert one's self, to achieve self-respect, to keep one's face and not be made ridiculous, extends from the poorest Argentine news vendor to the highest official in the land. And it affects every phase of Argentine life.

Argentines definitely believe familiarity can destroy self-respect. They watch for any possible infraction. They

maintain a sharp difference between the formal address of *usted* (you) in contrast with the more intimate *tu* (thou). No matter how old the acquaintance, they are unlikely to unbend, even conversationally, except to true intimates. Our habit of immediately calling many newly-introduced persons by their first names strikes the more formal Argentines as presumptuous. Yet the fact is that they do it in a different way. A distinguished acquaintance might be addressed as *Don* Rafael, or *Don* Jaime, the *Don* being used before the given name as an honorary mark of respect. Employing *Don* before the family name, however, would be an insult.

An Argentine who knows a person extremely well often adds the diminutive *ito* for masculine and *ita* feminine. Thus Juan becomes Juancito. Best-known example was that of President Perón's wife, Evita, literally "Little Eva." At first she insisted upon being known as Dona (the equivalent of Don as a mark of honor for a woman) Maria Eva Duarte de Perón, the full family name an Argentine lady of society might use. Then she apparently began to realize that being known by the diminutive of her given name was a rare thing. So the full name was dropped for Evita. In mid-1951, when plans were afoot to have her run for the Vice Presidency, slogans were posted throughout the country: "Perón—Evita" and "*Perón Cumple*" (in other words Perón does it, keeps his word, fulfills his promises), "*Evita Dignifica*" (Evita dignifies or makes it meaningful).

The Argentine concept of *dignidad* takes many forms. All Latin Americans share this concept, but the Argentine form is most acute. To an Argentine, *dignidad* means no man can be criticized in front of his friend. Employees

have been known to resign for lesser cause. Even office boys and porters, streetcar conductors and the sanitation men are treated with the same sort of *dignidad*, lest they become enemies. Argentine students must be strictly obedient to teachers, just as the private obeys his officer. Anything less would be *contra la dignidad*. Much of this applies chiefly to one's personal affairs. Friendship and intimacy are generally regarded as different—a distinction which, if misunderstood, is likely to confuse and perhaps get visiting North Americans into difficulties.

Under the Perón government's recent act of *desacato*, disrespect, anyone, Argentine or foreigner, who publicly criticizes the President, a Cabinet member, a Congressman, or even his family, faces severe penalties. A political opponent or a news correspondent who sends out a dispatch needs only to be accused of disrespect—and have this fact sustained by the offended party or the prosecutor—and he is guilty.

If, for example, an opponent charges a certain Ministry has exceeded its budget, and the Minister regards this as disrespectful, nothing else is needed to secure a conviction. While many an Argentine has found this hard to believe, the fact is that the law could be, and has been, sustained.

Real or fancied charges considered disrespectful still bring challenges to duels. Although they are officially illegal, it is rare that one has been stopped. In fact, when, as in most cases, political figures are involved, details are often reported in the press. If the papers do not carry stories, café gossip speculates on who is participating and what is allegedly involved.

How great the Argentine regard for *dignidad* can be-

come is graphically illustrated by an incident witnessed in December, 1947. In its widely distributed airmail edition, *Time* magazine carried a story describing the tremendous, super-patriotic, flag-waving show the government built round the ceremonial return to Argentina of the remains of the parents of General San Martín, currently Argentina's greatest national hero. It ended by quoting an alleged remark by a youthful onlooker: "Next year they are going to bring back the bones of his horse."

Though the reference had been laughed at by anti-Perónists, its appearance in a United States publication was taken even by them as a national insult rather than simply an amusing instance of journalistic color. The Argentine Ambassador in Washington protested. One Argentine paper demanded the *Time* correspondent's expulsion. Another said the Argentine press "would never have been so irreverent as to publish such items as the fact that George Washington drank eighteen glasses of wine with each meal, or that he married a rich widow because he had been told she was a good administrator."

To help placate many aggrieved feelings I flew up to Mendoza. Accompanied by the Governor of the Province and a military Guard, I proceeded up the approaches of the Andes to the monument erected in commemoration of the famous Army of the Andes. There I placed a wreath in honor of the heroes of the Army of the Andes and made a speech in Spanish about the achievements of General San Martín.

This was not hard for me to do, because I had read much about him, and considered him one of the great men of world history. His crossing of the Andes is com-

parable to the crossing of the Alps by Hannibal and Caesar.

The next day my speech was carried by all the daily press of the cities of the Andes plus very favorable editorial comment, as well as by the papers of Buenos Aires. Good feeling was restored, and the incident was closed.

Finally, by way of *desagravio*, compensation, the National San Martín Institute publicly laid a wreath on Washington's monument in Buenos Aires. This didn't quite add up in North American eyes, but to many Argentines it was a sober, fitting way of closing the incident in a manner befitting the *dignidad* of those affected.

The Argentine sense of humor, incidentally, is a much-debated subject. It is like much of our humor because it is based on exaggeration. However, many North Americans, French and others find that Argentines almost completely lack a spirit of real fun. One formerly sensed something of the national brand of wit in the political revues at the old Maipo Theater in Buenos Aires, where political take-offs were a part of the *porteño* scene. Argentine humor also appears in the routines of such famed Argentine comedians as Pepe Arias and Luis Sandrini whose style, in their heyday, was low key and apt to dwell on the complexities of life. One can also see the national sense of humor in some of Argentina's most popular cartoonists. Tristan's political drawings, however, make much of butchered legs and arms, while Luis Medrano simply caricatures *porteño*, city-dweller types. Nini Marshall, an Argentine comedienne who recreated an immigrant servant girl character à la Gracie Fields, developed a style of comedy that proved Argentines certainly could enjoy some kinds of jokes. One who did

not enjoy Nini's style, however, was Evita Perón. It is said that after a row, Nini left the stage and that unofficially her films were banned. This, in effect, placed her in professional exile in her own country.

There is something essentially sad about the Argentine character that is quickly apparent, especially to the newcomer. It shows in Argentine music, dress, and conversation, and, despite his optimism, in the average Argentine's outlook. Many of the stories popular in Buenos Aires are not locally created, but imports dressed up in local verbiage. Many of the comic strips are translations from abroad. Most locally produced humorous films are with few exceptions not really funny. Rather, they are drawing-room farces filled with talk.

Argentines love conversation. It goes on endlessly and everywhere. In the universities students enjoy nothing better than securing permission to debate with their professors. Such debate is also carried on in city cafés and out on the *estancias* during the frequent pauses for sipping the national beverage, *maté*, the bitter herb tea. Like ourselves, the Argentines often get carried away when they speak, oblivious to the noise they make. The bang of their cups in playing *bidou* (the favorite café dice game) and the din of music in the background seems only to spur them on.

Young Argentines soon learn how to reason on their feet or across the table. What one says and how one says it are fully as important as the facts. The speed of the response and the way the answer is phrased are considered telling. Often a conversation is really a game of matching wits. As one Argentine explained: "When you grow up in a big Argentine family, a good resounding

voice and an ability to keep talking is essential if you want to get your viewpoint and will across."

Argentines love the sport and drama of argument. They like to punctuate what they say with verbal thrusts and stinging barbs. Points are often made to win the approval of listeners rather than overwhelm opponents with logic. A stranger, first seeing a pair of Argentines in conversation, often feels that an explosion is imminent. To Argentines, a good rousing argument is a vital part of living. They like talk for talk's sake. Contradicting one's friends or enemies is routine.

Many an Argentine will take almost any other side of an argument, either out of pure contrariness or simply for the sport of it. At other times he will do it for the impression, the attention, and the spotlight it brings.

The Fascists won Argentine support with talk of their economic theories. Russian ideas have caught on in some quarters. The Frenchman's ability to converse has always delighted Argentines who are likely to say: "If we want to talk with North Americans we must talk about their business. Otherwise there is nothing to say."

In their talk, Argentines frequently balk stubbornly and are not overly sure of what they want, but are prepared to shout until they get it. This extends to international questions. One diplomat of long experience in Argentina phrased it this way: "If, somehow, Argentina had taken the lead in continental solidarity, she would probably have exceeded our fondest hopes for real inter-Americanism. When, for various reasons, she got on the other side of the fence, the more we and the rest of the Americas pushed one way, the more Argentina shoved the other."

In their international debating, Argentines have always been strong on principles and ideals. Often there is more talk than action. Our very unwillingness to give sufficient lip service to these things—despite the fact that we often wear our hearts on our sleeves—makes Argentines regard us as people lacking in soul and without their “broader basic concepts.”

The habit of contradiction, and the refusal of the average Argentine to take orders may, however, someday be their country's salvation, for, no matter who is in control, the Argentines, although moving slowly, have always somehow managed to contradict.

In their constant conversation and debating, Argentines are able to make the proper gesture and the right compliment. They do this naturally. When you visit them, for example, they will say, “You are in your own house” (*esta en su casa*). This implies an invitation to drop in at any time. The fact is, however, that a foreigner will rarely, even now, be invited to a true Argentine home unless he is extremely friendly with its owners. You are not expected to pay a visit without a formal invitation. “We are like you Yankees,” one Argentine said. “Our invitations mean about the same thing as your ‘Let's have lunch some time.’”

The North American who is invited to an Argentine home finds Argentines gracious hosts. Their friendly gestures have incomparable charm. Praise anything your Argentine host has and he will say: “*Es suyo*,” it's yours. Again, taking it would be unthinkable. Yet at the moment he says it, the Argentine undoubtedly is as sincere as we with our luncheon gesture.

For those he knows, the Argentine can be the world's

most courteous and charming individual. Unknowns get short shrift. Relatively few Argentines have any sense of public politeness. They frequently bump into people while scurrying round town, refusing all written or unwritten rules about keeping to the right or left, or giving the right of way to man, beast, or vehicle.

Yet, a friend, even a casual one, receives a warm *abrazo*—the bear hug, back-slapping greeting—when two Argentines meet, even after a short interval of not seeing one another. The *abrazo*, incidentally, is more than a greeting of friendship; it is used just as much in times of sadness or distress, serving in a sense as a symbol of friendly intimacy, the public limit to which Argentines will go. Occasionally even men who privately detest one another will extend the *abrazo* at an important public function as a sign that despite present circumstances they have known one another over a long period and can still be gracious. Though the *abrazo* appears highly demonstrative, it is a formality; it is an extension of the inevitable handshake, or the round of handshakes, of any Argentine introduction.

Carlton Beals, describing the rigidity of well-to-do Argentine manners, says: "At a strictly formal function, the slightest deviation from etiquette means social ruin. The fixed greeting, the precise repetitions of your own name, are typical. Even sex, though more open and coquettish, more sly and daring, always is more protected by fixed rules."

Yet outside his immediate circle the Argentine man seldom hesitates to ignore formality and offer the most extravagant remarks, or *piropos*, to the passing *señoritas* on the streets. Such *piropos* come from Argentines of all

ages, *porteños* or provincials. They will stand idly on the sidewalk or sit in a café, one eye ever alert for a *chica* whose looks or features may be worth a second glance and a *piropo*. Most *señoritas* don't seem to object, at least not too vocally. An attractive girl will hear such expressions as "What a potato," which is equivalent to "What a peach," or the more elegant, "What lovely eyes you have, little angel."

The *piropo* may be picturesque or provocative. The Argentine male has become so expert at the art that he seems to know exactly the right thing to say, poetic, clever or bright. He also senses to whom to say it. Some *señorita* or *señora* may feel above such things. Yet attractive U. S. women who know Spanish and have spent some time in Argentina often miss the *piropos* when they return to the States. One woman confessed when she returned to the States: "Somehow, I get a feeling I'm slipping. *Nobody* notices me any more."

In days past—and it was not so long ago at that—the *piropos* of Argentina's *caballeros* on the streets would be accompanied by a slight pinch on the *señorita's* posterior. In theory, at least, Argentines tell you, this practice enabled a belle to poll her popularity by counting the black marks when she returned from a stroll. The custom—especially when it was publicized by visitors—gave Buenos Aires a reputation the city fathers were not especially anxious to enjoy. First the municipality ordered the arrest of any man against whom a pinching complaint was made. Subsequently, this became a bit of a racket. So the girls were held until the police could determine the background of the complainant, and action was taken accordingly. Currently, the experts insist the

pinch, if experienced at all, is little more than a gentle pat. And old-time *porteños* sadly insist life in Buenos Aires lacks yesterday's zest.

Despite all the colorful Latin implications and the romantic aura of tradition found in so many aspects of Argentine life, the average Argentine's thought is extremely practical. Many Argentines consider themselves idealists, yet they are perhaps the most materialistic of all Latins. A majority of city-dwelling Argentines are very money-conscious. Their talk deals with purchases and profits. Like most practical New Englanders, they are likely to want to know: "What's in it for me?"

Often the complaint about our being materialistic comes from upper-class Argentines who inherited their wealth, or at least did not have to work hard for it. They look down on the first-generation *nouveau riche* still aggressively gathering their fortunes.

Argentina's materialism extends to a desire to get something for nothing. Thus, again like Americans, Argentines are strong on bargains. Shops often feature sales and mark-downs, real or contrived. To limit such *saldos*, the government now requires retailers to obtain special official permits before advertising sell-outs. Nonetheless, since Argentines insist almost anything can be accomplished for a little under-the-table *coima*, palm-greasing, no one can be sure the official permit makes the sale any more authentic or legitimate. This unfortunate practice, of course, is not limited to Argentina.

Most Argentines are bargain-seekers because underneath their frequently sad faces they are optimists, certain everything will eventually turn out all right. Their love of gambling and of taking a chance to get something

for nothing is traditional. Should his cattle and crops go without water for any appreciable time, an Argentine may face ruin. Contrariwise, if weather is favorable, he may be in the money. But he feels he cannot do much about rain, anyway. And, as with roulette at the great Atlantic seashore resort of Mar del Plata, win or lose, the Argentine feels it is something beyond his control.

If things go well, he is pleased. But if they go badly, he is not likely to be too concerned. Impassivity in moments of danger or reverses is a characteristic much admired.

As can be expected of a nation which has produced some of the world's finest horses and horsemen, and where these things are revered almost above womankind, physical courage is a national trait, and individual heroism not unusual. The Argentine's courage, however, is not the reckless, foolhardy variety or the sort that makes him eager to fight and die for ideals, frequently cited history to the contrary.

Thus, Argentines are law-abiding, yet unresponsive to discipline. They are freedom-loving, but unwilling to take a stand and die for it.

Someone once said, in fact, that Argentina's great trouble is chronic indecision—leaving a way out without becoming involved. "*No te metas*" is a favorite expression meaning: "Don't get yourself mixed up in anything which can only cause you trouble." It is much like our World War II Army expression: "Never volunteer for anything—you'll only have headaches." Most Argentines share this feeling. They want to keep out of anything which might cause them any personal disturbance.

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, after

living in Argentina, said that the national motto seemed to be "Mind your own business." Ernesto Sabato gives this example:

"Suppose, let us say, there is an argument or an altercation of some sort between a bus driver and a passenger. The average Argentine looks on with ironic detachment and remains aloof. And if the police take a hand in the matter and seek a witness, nobody has seen anything, nobody was there, nobody heard a word. There is more than a grain of truth in Ortega's characterization. The average Argentine employs a kind of philosophy that always sees the pro and con of every fact, which makes it hard for him to find motives strong enough to justify a positive attitude."

Argentines want most to live peacefully. They seek a tranquil existence, hence are willing to talk but go along rather than fight back. Some feel this characteristic has stemmed from the vast flat *pampa* where the temperature is mild all year round and the cattle are placid, bland, and phlegmatic. True, the trait of tranquility is more notable in the interior than in Buenos Aires. Yet even among those Argentines who are excitable and passionate in other ways, the desire to keep out of trouble, to remain uninvolved, to refuse to upset oneself unduly, is traditional.

This is not to imply that Argentines do not admire those who make up their minds about what they want and go after it. The Nazis set their goals in Argentina and proceeded to pursue them without deviating. The Argentine military, following their example, did the same in 1943 when it marched to the Casa Rosada—Buenos Aires' rose-colored government house—and took over. But Ar-

gentines have often noted that the United States while protesting Argentina's strangulation of democracy, has rarely been able to decide what to do about it.

"You have switched from one side to another," they say. "You have talked and been blamed for economic sanctions, yet you have not followed through. You have threatened to isolate us; then you have sought our friendship. Thus, one day you have encouraged democratic resistance—and the next pulled back. What, in view of this, can you expect from us?"

The Argentines' habit of indecision stems in part from the Latin habit of *mañana* or putting off anything important until tomorrow. Argentines are not as much given to the custom as, say, Mexicans or Central Americans. Yet *mañana* is still part of the national tradition, particularly when it involves doing something distasteful. Argentines, particularly those in official activities, are apt to procrastinate further, promising to resolve the matter *pasado* (the day after) *mañana*. But should this draw demands for action they say: "You North Americans dash around to fill and keep the schedule, regardless of accomplishment. We get the same results when it is all over, for we find things frequently take care of themselves."

The *mañana* habit is on its way out in Buenos Aires. In September, 1951, for instance, one of my friends ordered a number of custom-made articles—shoes, hats, suits, etc.—a brief time before his departure. Every store delivered the things on time, exactly when promised.

Such speed is not so common when one has a house to build, painting to be done, a car to be fixed. On the other hand, as Argentines are quick to point out: "In the United

States, few builders or craftsmen any longer keep promises, so what is the great difference?"

Mañana to the average Argentine also means taking time out to savor things, to enjoy life. Though the *porteños* of Buenos Aires are far more businesslike than other Latins, they still believe a certain number of pleasantries must come first. One first inquires about a colleague's wife, his children, and perhaps uncles, aunts and other relatives, then business. Such preliminaries are considered an essential in being *simpático*. The man who is all bustle and accomplishment might be considered full of effervescent agitation but hardly *simpático*.

Simpático gestures vary widely. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, was considered highly *simpático*. His graciousness, his personality, the way he phrased things, the interest he expressed in them, were all noted. Argentines do not generally love a person who is *simpático*. But the feeling does establish a relationship that can help solve many problems. An Argentine politician who lacks this quality is rarely accepted. He may achieve power in other ways, but he will never receive the intense loyalty from his followers which permits him to hold on and on, despite things which would force a *Norteamericano* from office.

The fact that many of Perón's followers regard him as *simpático* is one reason for his success not often appreciated outside the country, for Argentines believe more in loyalty to persons than to ideas or principles. With innate knowledge of this point, Perón and the militarists seek constantly to create the feeling that Argentina is under fire from the United States and Britain. Their aim is to arouse an allegiance which can help keep them in

power. They also seek to make Argentines feel a sense of fealty and pride in the fame, if not the notoriety, which Perón has brought their country.

Argentines of top families have, to put it mildly, frequently been critical of the Peróns. Many spoke openly against them in their homes. They felt Evita's radio-actress-girl-about-town background was detrimental to their country. They said she conducted herself poorly, particularly on her famed European trip when she saw the Pope, was decorated by Franco in Madrid, and spent a good deal of her time buying expensive gowns in Paris.

Both peronistas and their opponents express a certain pride in what Perón has done to make Argentina better known and give her a more important role in hemispheric and world affairs. "You must hand it to him," they say in effect. "He has made the others sit up and take notice."

Since Argentines of every group have always been determined to articulate their strong faith in their own destiny, this phase of Perón's activities has been astutely exploited. During inter-American conferences when the question of Argentina's possible break with the Axis was in world headlines, many Argentines were delighted at the banner type and the long dispatches reporting what London, Washington and Paris were saying about them. Such newspaper stories not only further the national feeling of importance, but are somehow regarded as an indication of outside approval.

Fearful of their own sovereignty, even pro-democratic Argentines still nurse the idea that the United States has designs on them and that the British would seek to ex-

plot them. Most tell you so openly. They do not believe it in quite the way the Nazi propagandists wanted, nor do they all accept the government's version of foreign designs. But they believe it nonetheless. And it helps explain why Argentine officials often put up a tremendous display of resistance to United States proposals at hemispheric conferences even if they later back down.

"You have to remember we never overlook what the home reaction will be," one delegate confessed.

In international relations, Argentina used to view Europe as a somewhat arbitrary but well-loved parent, and the United States as an obstreperous and greedy older brother. To carry the analogy still further, Argentines have always been jealous of the rich, powerful brother, in the same way children are jealous, realizing they could never be the first nation in this hemisphere. When Argentines talk of holding the Number One position in the world south of the Rio Grande, they concede that the States holds first place north of it. This, to most, is eminently right and proper. "But," they ask, "if you *Norteamericanos* run things up north, why are you unwilling to admit Argentina should run things down south?"

Argentina's Army officers, deep in their hearts, feel this with special conviction. Those who know the military mind say that the egotism of the General Staff is quite equal to that of the military leaders of Germany or pre-war Japan. Even pro-democratic Argentines may still feel it.

Even though they finally entered the war on our side, Argentines feel their basic position is neutral. "Such countries as Switzerland, Portugal, Turkey, Sweden, Ireland,

all had a definite role during World War II," they say. "Our role, even today, is not unlike theirs."

Since the beginning of their independent life, Argentines have always tried to avoid entangling alliances. "We want to keep out of other people's wars. We want to run our affairs, to sell our goods to all, to extend special friendships with those countries which buy from us. Why should we be forced to take sides?"

In part this stems from the Argentines' realistic idea that they must take care of themselves first. Because they did not want to be swept away, Argentines waited to see how both opponents were really doing before making up their minds in World War II. Pearl Harbor was, we insisted, a direct attack obligating Argentina to keep her pledges to join us. Most Latin Republics quickly agreed. Argentines, feeling neither threatened nor attacked, wanted to remain neutral. To us this may seem purely opportunistic. Yet, as one Argentine reasoned: "When one is a small country, this makes a kind of sense which you, in a big country, really do not quite understand."

For years Argentina has been in the convulsions of a social revolution far deeper than her military coup. Regular processes of what might have been an ordinarily democratic change have been thrown aside. The disturbed atmosphere has been stirred up by those who wish to play up their own interest—the Communists, the Fascists, the nationalists, and other groups we shall presently examine.

And so Argentina moves ahead. She is puzzling to us; more often, puzzling to herself.

Chapter II

Meet Some Argentines

THE PORTEÑOS OF THE CAPITAL

YOU WILL probably encounter him first on the Calle Florida, a narrow, brightly-lit street that runs for a mile through the heart of Argentina's Capital of Buenos Aires.

His suit is somber, his shoes brightly polished, his tie, probably black and worn with a tiny pearl stickpin. He carries his gloves correctly. There's a white kerchief in the breast pocket. On his head is a carefully brushed hat. At first glance you won't know if he is a banker or a clerk. His mustache won't provide a clue—most male Argentines wear them, as one put it, "to demonstrate our virility." Neither will you get a revealing hint from his air of affluence or his heavily slang-flavored Spanish, with its references to the newest show, the latest deal, and the high-scoring *futbol* star.

His pace seems brisk yet unhurried—whether it's eleven in the morning or seventeen in the afternoon (5 P.M.) on the twenty-four-hour Continental clock system used in Argentina. He considers the promenade an essential of his day. Automobiles are banned from Florida until late in the evening so he will not have to dodge the fast-moving man behind the wheel who is likely to consider his car as much a weapon as a vehicle. On Florida, there is always time to keep an eye on the passing *señoritas*, to whisper the newest *piropo*, or to stop in at his favorite café for a coal black *café espresso* or a *vermouth con soda*.

Banker or clerk, shopkeeper or waiter, the *porteño* probably carries a calling card listing his profession, titles, and often his honorary connections. Doctors of philosophy generally use the term "Doctor" throughout their lives. Engineers retain their title of *Ingeniero*, architects that of *Arquitecto*. The *porteño* has a pride in himself, what he does, and where he lives—and rarely fails to express it, for there is something about Buenos Aires that gives most of its people a sense of being in what to them is the greatest city in the New World. Smaller than New York? Or, if you insist, even Chicago? "Yes, in numbers," he will say. But that is obviously not important to the three-million-odd city-dwellers and the additional million or more inhabitants of the suburbs of Buenos Aires.

Buenos Aires to them is not only big. Its metropolitan area has more than one-fourth of Argentina's eighteen million population, and because of the desire for higher wages, bright lights, and other attractions of the big town, Buenos Aires is growing faster than the rest of the country. Apply the same percentage to New York, they say,

and it would have approximately forty millions. For a proper comparison you would have to throw in Washington too, for Buenos Aires is a federal district, the center both of national government and business, art and intellect, sports and fashion, transport and communications—and the hub point of a continent now in crisis.

To the resident of Buenos Aires the thing that makes his town and his role in it so stimulating is that Buenos Aires is obviously the *center* of everything. It is a town, he will tell you, of which a man must be proud. A town where you can hear the best tangos and perhaps, someday, write one yourself. A metropolis where you need your best clothes all the time, and where the men—who dress up more than the women—first introduced the ultimate in urban formality—a summer straw hat done in the shape of a Homburg.

It is a city whose people like to take two hours for lunch and three for dinner—even though, to their dismay, they now have to finish their meal in half the time. *Porteños* love crowds, excitement, bright lights, and the glass-fronted, modern movie palaces that line Calle Lavalle. In Buenos Aires, even the Recoleta Cemetery looks as though it had been dressed up. That is the effect given by its highly ornate family vaults built above ground like miniature houses of the dead. The Argentines love their metropolis, take an interest in all its activities, and proudly feel that no other world capital has half as many attractions. They are self-conscious about their town. They closed down their public houses of ill repute in the late thirties because foreigners wrote books like “The Road to Buenos Aires.” Though the exposé named no names and offered more allure than alarm, the inci-

dent provoked national indignation. Films offending *porteño* sensitivity are so vehemently booed that theater owners withdraw them rather than risk violence.

Many observers feel the city dweller lacks a sense of proportion and the ability to think objectively, particularly when he hears himself discussed. Yet he enjoys his own particular brand of witticism, especially the *cachada*. This is the fine art of poking sly, often caustic fun at an individual in a group without letting him know what is happening. The victim's shoes, or his favorite sports club, or his taste in *señoritas* are praised. Compliment is piled on compliment, until, as the *porteño* puts it, "praise runs from the ears." Everybody is in the know save the butt of the jest. The *porteño* relishes every compliment—yet aware of the *cachada*, and being like many an Argentine unsure of himself, he is likely before too long to break down. The skillful *porteño cachadisto* can keep up a running *cachada* for as long as an hour without the victim's being quite sure of just what is going on.

With all the activity of *porteño* life, the capital produces in most citizens a concentration on one's own affairs, a kind of coldness and indifference that possibly marks big-city people everywhere. The farther you get into the interior, the friendlier the people.

Buenos Aires is, first and foremost, a man's town. This is evident in the numerous clubs and in the café life of the city. The Richmond is one of the favorite cafés. The Odeon Bar—not to be confused with the elegant restaurant—is favored by Argentina's jazz fans. The financial crowd frequents the Boston Bar, shippers go to the Fragata, and *políticos*, real and would-be, favor Del Molino, on the plaza near Congress.

Visitors just down from the United States sometimes feel that since Argentines spend so much time in their cafés they can't get much business done. *Porteños* disagree. They that feel the café is an essential part of their normal routine. As one man put it: "We accomplish as much over a café table as you do in your office. And it's far more convenient. A telephone call costs only twenty *centavos*, though it used to be free. Besides, there is no eavesdropping secretary to listen in. One's friends are here with the inside story of the Finance Ministry's latest move—or the newest scandal. Besides, *señor*, in what office can one get all of this service, plus food, and those lovely *señoritas* passing just outside the window all at the same time?"

Whatever happens in Buenos Aires—and to a relative degree in the interior—is pretty thoroughly worked out in the cafés beforehand. The Argentine café has a social and political significance hard for an outsider to visualize. It may be a smart place in town, a neighborhood café which spreads out to the sidewalk, or a remote provincial *boliche*. All have a collection of tiny, marble-topped tables, back-breaking chairs, and a long service bar presided over by a portly, chit-dispensing proprietor at the elaborate, imported National Cash Register. Many have an adjoining *salón para familias*, a family gathering place often marked only by the fact that its tables boast a few stained cloths, a couple of artificial flowers in a stiff little vase, and a *señora's* room.

Step into any Buenos Aires café, summon the waiter with the *porteño's* penetrating hiss, order what you want, and you can sit as long as you please. The café is part political club, part gambling casino. All day long, and

even far into the night, the smack of the *bidou* cup, rolling out the three dice in the absorbing Argentine game, makes the place noisier than a bowling alley. The higher the decibel count the better regular patrons seem to like it. Stakes are rarely high however. Usually men play only for the round of coffees or drinks—a point which they insist encourages moderate drinking.

Supplementing the cafés are the *confiterías*. They have some features of a tearoom, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor and a New York Schrafft's restaurant. They provide a place to drop in for tea, a snack, a morning pause and a sandwich. *Confiterías* are for ladies and youngsters as well as for men. *Bidou* is banned. They offer the fanciest pastry to be found anywhere this side of the Riviera. You may choose the pastry you like best from the large trays brought to your table. You get a check for the total and a return for those you do not touch. Many *confiterías* in Buenos Aires and in the larger provincial cities are more elaborate than our most stylish pink satin Park Avenue bonbon shops. Others look like relics of gaslight Paris with lavish use of marble, great glittering crystal chandeliers, red velvet and lace, and an air of having rejected all attempts at modernization since opening day.

Both the cafés and the *confiterías* fit in with the *porteños'* habit of staying up late. *Porteños* never seem to get tired enough to want to go home early. After the *ciné*, theater or concert, they jam the downtown *confiterías* and cafés. Neighborhood places are likely to be just as crowded. Time and place are, however, highly important. With his determined sophistication, the *porteño* is well aware that the *noche de moda* at the Embassy night club on the Plaza San Martín is Thursday—and that no one

who is anyone would go on a Monday. On Saturday at midday one has a *copetín*—generally a sweet cocktail—at Harrod's big, walnut-paneled tearoom, patterned after its London store. Only *señoras* and *señoritas* drop in during the week.

The *porteño's* skills at producing goods, buildings, and money, and his faults and foibles often resemble those of our own city-dwellers. He has the same insincerity, overbearing manner, and materialistic viewpoint so often charged against our big town residents. Yet, the Parisians, the Madrileños, and the Milanese possibly understand the residents of Buenos Aires better than we. The reason lies both in the things the *porteño* likes to do, and in the way his mind works.

Save where their dominant characteristic is Northern Italian, Slavic, or Teutonic, they are likely to appear somewhat more delicately formed than we. This, and his interest in gossip and fashionable chit-chat, sometimes causes unknowing visitors to regard him as effete. Such impressions are highly deceiving.

Actually it is money which dominates a good deal of *porteño* thinking. You hear more talk of prospects and deals than you probably would in New York or any other large American city with, say, the exception of Houston, Texas, during its boom-town period.

All over Buenos Aires you see *casas de cambio*—money exchanges—where dealings go on day after day in pesos, dollars, pounds, and francs. Figures of the day's buy and sell offers are posted in their windows like stocks. And they are as familiar to the average *porteño* as our Coca-Cola signs. Buenos Aires has Latin America's busiest stock exchange, and the most commodious and active

banks handling the largest number of business transactions.

The *porteños* are strong individualists. They are self-satisfied, imperturbable, uncooperative. Not only do they dislike lining up for tickets, they have never accepted traffic lights. They are convinced it would be beneath their dignity to be governed by anything "so mechanical and without soul."

The *porteño* seeks many of the same things the North American seeks. He doesn't care for any old car; he wants a new Detroit model, with freshly-scrubbed white wall tires—of which Buenos Aires seems to have more per capita than almost any other world capital. It does not bother him that his car costs two to three times what it does in the United States and represents a far greater percentage of his income, for what he cannot buy directly, he often gets on the installment plan. *Créditos*—so much down and so much a month—are available for every kind of product and service, even funerals. "Without them," many a *porteño* insists, "I could not keep going." The Buenos Aires Banco Municipal de Prestamos, municipal pawn shop, is as big as a major United States department store and serves hundreds of thousands of customers.

Both the *porteño* and his wife are usually socially ambitious. Appearance, which is regarded as a basic sign of one's social status, is a first consideration in Buenos Aires. The male *porteño* keeps his hair so slick that other Latins say Argentines are born with a bottle of *gomina*—the favorite hair tonic—in one hand. Buenos Aires has more *peluquerias*, or barber shops, than almost any other capital. These glittering palaces of gleaming glass and polished brass have white-smocked barbers, manicurists,

sports magazines, and, in all likelihood, even a tattered copy of *Esquire* imported from the United States. With all their interest in *señoritas*, the Argentines have no such publication of their own. There are barber shops in scores of cafés, clubs, subway and rail stations and rare is the *porteño* who doesn't look—and smell—as if he has just come from one.

The *porteño* probably spends a far greater percentage of his income on clothes than most American males. Even the poorest manage to keep their suits neat and well pressed. In front of the Naval Club in the center of Buenos Aires, there's a blind pencil seller who wears a black Homburg—and no one thinks it odd.

In part this tradition of dress stems from the Spanish and British influence. The smartest men's shops all have English names: Warrington, Rhoder's, The Brighton—though they are no longer, and perhaps never were, empire outposts. The *porteño* would not be seen dead in one of the garish neckties sold in the United States.

If he is above the lowest economic rank, he will somehow contrive to have his clothes made to order, usually by a special little tailor he has discovered. His suits will be cut a bit more tightly than ours, the shoulders a bit broader. Essentially, however, they will be highly conservative. Few white collar workers would think of appearing in town with sports jackets or loud shirts. In the last decade more informal, made-to-order clothes have been noticeable. The Casa Braudo has grown prosperous by offering one pair of trousers gratis. But most *porteños* still regard such establishments contemptuously as manifestations of "Made-in-U.S.A." civilization.

The *porteño's* wife will, in nine cases out of ten, also

cling to her own little dressmaker rather than buy ready-made clothes. The dressmaker may have only a sewing machine in a tiny flat, or maintain a chic establishment in the smart northern district. Several of the big Paris *couturiers* have their only foreign branches in Buenos Aires.

The women of Buenos Aires have a knack of wearing their clothes smartly. They dress with more formality than their sisters in the United States, preferring darker colors. Black is considered stylish as well as utilitarian since most Argentines observe old-fashioned mourning customs.

Not having an opportunity to engage in as many activities as American women, the *señora* and *señorita* of Buenos Aires spend much more time on dress. Local fashion magazines are plentiful. Copies of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*—both American and French editions—are also widely followed. Many a dressmaker can copy a model simply from studying the illustration. Scores of shops sell fabrics of all kinds, both domestic and imported. Time spent shopping for just the right handbag, the correct shoes, the exact scarf and gloves to go with an ensemble is considered well invested.

The *porteña* frequents her beauty parlor even more than does her North American sister. For her, as for her father, brother, or husband, keeping up appearances and the impression of well-being is all important.

This concept has spread even to the remote areas of Argentina. Even small towns have numerous *salons de bellezas*. One little-publicized yet vital factor in Perón's "emancipation of Argentina's working class," was the fact that for the first time many women could afford a weekly

trip to the beauty shop. One housemaid told us: "Before Perón, we servants never enjoyed such luxuries. Now we do. Other things may be costlier. But to us life has always been expensive and we have had nothing to show for it. Now at last we can feel like ladies."

Every Argentine woman and most Argentine males use scent. The number of perfume shops in Buenos Aires runs into the thousands. Their windows are filled with bottles, lipsticks, brushes, all carefully arranged in multi-colored geometric patterns. There are innumerable varieties of colognes and toilet waters.

As we have noted, while in the past such Buenos Aires shops as Harrod's featured imported goods, and many *porteños* were reluctant to buy things made in their own country, today most consumer items are labeled *Industria Argentina*, the stamp required for all locally manufactured items. These run a wide range. Most fabrics used in men's and women's suits are now national, although British woollens are imported and sold at higher prices. Nationally made shoes dominate. So do domestically-produced women's gloves, alligator and other leather bags.

In the past, Argentine hides were usually shipped to Britain for treatment, made into finished goods, and sent back for sale in the smart shops. Today it would be hard to find British-made shoes in Buenos Aires. Argentina has, in fact, become a shoe exporter to neighboring countries. Some unusual designs are even sold on Manhattan's fashionable Fifth Avenue.

Shop window displays are more symmetrical than imaginative. Exclusive men's shops show racks of shirts folded back so their collars are hidden. Ties are knotted and ends spread with the greatest precision. The smaller

shops follow the lead, neatly displaying their wares on little metal stands against highly polished woodwork. Most shops give carefully written receipts for each purchase. Packages are tied with a little wooden handle fitted into the string so that they may be carried delicately. The rude, disinterested sales clerks so frequently found in the United States are rare in Buenos Aires.

Face and show are all important for the *porteño*. Even the lowliest clerk who will not be paid for another week is likely to spend his last *peso* treating a friend to a vermouth or tram fare, rather than give any indication he lacks money. As his income rises, the *porteño* thinks first of buying things to wear for himself and his family, then of improving his home. He wants an apartment in an attractive building. The exterior is more important than the quarters themselves, for few but intimate friends are likely to come up for a visit. The *porteño* wants to display what he has, not guard it in the bank. Savings accounts per capita are far lower than here.

When he dies, the *porteño* wants a funeral with matched black horses, possibly from Casa Miras, a funeral establishment so aggressive in its merchandising that it has an advertisement on every page of the 356-page Buenos Aires telephone directory. *Porteño* families faced with the problem of burying old Uncle Maximiliano in the style befitting the family name have been known to rent a vault for a night in swank Recoleta Cemetery and next morning move the remains to a less expensive resting place.

Argentina benefited economically from both World Wars, and nowhere in the world wealth and prosperity were more ostentatiously displayed than in Buenos Aires.

Even today the *porteño* often feels that his city is the world's lushest, the last sanctuary of well-being in a globe torn by what he regards as "purposeless conflict."

He cannot understand why prices of food and clothing are skyrocketing. Still he knows he is far better off than most other people in the world. "Our government may be bad," he will say, "but what the rest of the world is going through is barbarous!"

The most important *porteños* in the public eye—and those who show off to the greatest degree—are the new, top-notch industrialists. Some have progressive labor and public relations ideas, but most have the same characteristics our industrial leaders had a generation or two back. There is little public ownership of shares or accounting of profits. *Porteño* industrialists don't feel the public has a right to know much about their enterprises. Their social behavior and their economic and political creeds are inferior to those of similar groups in the United States, England, or prewar Germany. They make deals where they may, forget scruples when these interfere, and pile up what they can—making certain that as much as possible is invested outside Argentina, just in case they lose their influence in government circles or there is a serious political crisis. Though he may work energetically to succeed, once the self-made industrialist has completed what he has set out to do, he will give himself the leisure to get the fullest enjoyment out of life.

The *porteño* wants to set his own pace, and he hates to lose any of his personal rights and privileges. One unusual demonstration of this occurred shortly after the military coup, when Vice-President Admiral Saba H. Sueyro died. Even though he was virtually unknown, two days

of national mourning were decreed, one a Sunday. For the first time in as long as anybody could remember, Buenos Aires racetracks, movies, cafés and *confiterías* were all shuttered tight. *Porteños*, who in many cases had not even begun to think about the government's interventions, were more upset by the period of enforced mourning for Sueyro than by almost anything else the militarists had done. "Imagine," one man commented, "we couldn't even go for a walk on the Florida. It was intolerable. It was uncivilized."

The *porteño* most of all fancies himself a cosmopolitan living in the heart of civilization. He knows that when he sits down at a dinner party in Buenos Aires at twenty-two in the evening (10 P.M.), the first question may well be: "What language shall we speak tonight?" In the course of a day he may converse in Italian, English, and French, as well as in his own Spanish. He will probably transact business in a foreign bank, get his clothes French dry-cleaned at a Japanese *tintorería*, and buy his coffee from *Los Dos Chinos* (The Two Chinamen). The radio that wakes him comes from Belgium. His bathroom fixtures were probably made in Holland, and he may ride to work in a German car, or on a subway built by the Spanish. He has only to go down to the docks—as many a *porteño* loves to do on any pleasant holiday afternoon—and see there the ships of every nation in the world tied up to take their fill of what Argentina produces.

True, this could, to a certain extent, be said about New York City. Yet New York's polyglot cosmopolitanism is likely to be found at one of two extremes: the very bottom in the poorer districts—Italian, Armenian, Greek, Puerto Rican—or in a smattering among the very top so-

ciety. In Buenos Aires the international flavor goes all the way through. Yet while the *porteño* feels this affinity with those across the Atlantic, he has not, at least up until now, had much desire to share their difficulties or tighten his own belt in order to aid them more.

In part it is because he loves his own rich food too well. He knows Buenos Aires' restaurants are among the world's finest, rarely serving him a poor meal. Many have been in business for a half century. Their menus are extensive. Naturally, they concentrate on beef, but it is hard to name any French or Italian dish they do not serve. There are none of the spicy dishes which North Americans, who know Mexico, are apt to expect everywhere South of the Border.

For instance, look at the menu at a typical first-class restaurant like La Cabaña or La Estancia, both of which are extremely popular with Argentines as well as with tourists. Prices are not nearly as high as at the top luxury hotels, the Alvear Palace or Plaza. The Cabaña's menu shows on its lists nineteen kinds of cold meats including suckling pig, small tongues, antipasto, mushrooms in oil; five soups of the regular kind, plus three soups of the day; thirteen different kinds of so-called pastas, including ravioli, cannellón, taglierini; and five different kinds of rice in many different styles. There are seven regular salads and fifteen different kinds of fish including the Argentine specialty, *pejerrey* from the Rio de la Plata. The regular grill lists lamb, calf, sweetbreads, intestine, udder, lamb kidneys, veal kidneys, black pudding, special sausages, criollo and Italian sausages, rib roast, veal chops, grilled lamb, lamb chops, tenderloin steaks, entrecots, and a mixed grill.

These, it might be emphasized, are simply the regular listing. Under cold meats of the day there are an additional twelve items, fifteen different specialties, or what we might term entrees, and by actual count thirty-nine different desserts.

This is by no means the biggest menu to be found in Buenos Aires. A restaurant such as the Grill of the Hotel Plaza is far more expensive and has a longer menu. Even small second and third class places offer a far greater variety of food than most of our restaurants.

The *porteño* not only eats his heavy lunch and dinner, but pauses for food at least once—and perhaps twice—between each meal. He will probably stop for coffee late in the morning, or a sandwich and a *café con leche* (coffee with milk) before lunch. Most people have tea in the afternoon, crowding into one of the scores of Paulista coffee shops if they don't have a favorite *confitería* near by.

There are no drugstores with soda fountains. But a group of quick lunch places, known as Vascongadas and run by a Basque, are patterned roughly on some of our milk bars. They have become popular, and they feature such specialties as "*waf-lees americanos con Crema Chantilly*," and "*Ays Krim Sodas*," in almost as many flavors as Howard Johnson himself serves.

Since even a *porteño* snack is tremendous, the chief complaint is liver trouble caused by overeating. Those who don't die with liver ailments are generally living with them. Yet on the other hand, they do not seem to have the number of strokes, cardiac conditions, ulcers and other afflictions that trouble us so much. They have, incidentally, made their town a fairly healthy place.

Buenos Aires's vital statistics compare favorably with New York, Chicago and other large North American cities. Few deaths from malaria are recorded and, in recent years, none from yellow fever.

Because perhaps he is essentially sad and wants constant diversion to spice his passion for tranquility, the *porteño* supports more film houses than almost any other world capital. Buenos Aires also has as many as twenty-eight legitimate playhouses running during the season. Its racetracks and stadiums are the hemisphere's finest. Taking their sports seriously, Argentines build gigantic coliseums in which to view them.

The *porteño* likes to think his Spanish is perfect, but he drops his d's, slurs his s's and mispronounces his double l's and his y's by strict Castillian standards. His Spanish lacks the softness of Mexican and the poetry of Colombian Spanish. It has plenty of flavorsome Italian phrases.

In the course of a ten-minute conversation, his frequent gestures remind North Americans of the once-popular "handies." The open hand swept from under the chin means "*no se*," I don't know. His finger holding down his eyelid means "*ojo*," watch out. Twirling an imaginary mustache indicates something is "*macanudo*," very O. K., a term that's completely *porteño*; its use by a North American stamps him as one of the *cognoscenti*. Palm out, tilting from side to side, means "*mas o menos*," more or less.

The inhabitant of Buenos Aires is likely to look down on an Argentine from the interior. And while many of the secondary cities have their own individual personalities which we shall examine later, they ape the customs of Buenos Aires. The street with the smartest shops re-

sembles Calle Florida. Fashions are advertised as "directly from the capital." If you leave for the capital on a train in remote Bariloche you find your destination listed as "Plaza Constitution," not Buenos Aires. Trains from the north head for the Presidente Perón, formerly the Retiro Station.

No matter what his position in life, the *porteño* feels the big town gives him something special. He is likely to think of the interior as a remote and uninteresting region or as a place he has come from but wants to forget.

As Argentine nationalism rises, the number of *porteños* who seek to give the impression that their Buenos Aires is an adjunct of Paris rather than the great port of the *pampa* constantly decreases. More and more Argentines show convincing pride in their country. The inferiority complex is still strong, but the emphasis on *Argentinidad*, the rise of nationalism, and the increased domestic travel (due to unfavorable foreign exchange rates) are all having their effect.

Chapter III

The Middle Class Is Argentina

SOMEONE ONCE defined the middle class as that group which sets up a budget and tries to live within it. While the definition may apply in some countries, it certainly does not to the Argentine. Most of Argentina's middle class would have difficulty in living within a budget, and as a rule they do not even try.

* The *estancia* owners—those proprietors of the great landed cattle-raising estates whom we shall examine presently—were the group on whom Argentina's wealth was built. For years it was they who controlled both its economic and its political destiny.

On the other hand, it was the working class at the other extreme of the economic ladder on whom Perón depended for the popular force which enabled him first to obtain

personal power after the Army officers had seized control of the civilian government.

Today, however, many believe the middle class is the group on which the Government as well as the country must depend for its future.

Why is this so?

* The reason lies first in the fact that Argentina is (with the exception of her close neighbor Uruguay) the one Latin American republic which has a sizable middle class. Again like Uruguay, Argentina is the only country without a large Indian, Negro, or *mestizo* population.

* Most Argentina observers define the middle class as that vast group which lies between the *estancia*-owning families at the top of the economic ladder and the agricultural and city laborers at the bottom. The city laborer and factory hand, the *obrero*, regards himself as being in the working class. The white-collar employee, the *empleado*, is legally and by his own concept, someone in the middle class. Some artisans or skilled workers, particularly if they have their own little businesses, also consider themselves middle-class Argentines. So do the teacher and the professional, even though they might actually earn less than laborers or artisans.

Many middle-class Argentines are second or third generation sons and daughters of European immigrants. They received more education than their parents. Many became merchants, or intermediate or even top government officials. Others work in the shops and the offices of the big packing plants and the utilities. Many have gone into small businesses of their own.

—Because until comparatively recent times Argentina had no sizable industry, she developed no early indus-

trial middle class. The middle class began with Argentina's period of stepped-up immigration, primarily in the cities. The most sizable recent increase in the middle class is the result of the arrival of Europeans who fled from Europe because of Hitler. Many brought special skills and merchandising initiative to the country, opened small businesses which have produced excellent returns to their owners and have given employment to many Argentines.

* In Argentina's middle class are the descendants of the Italians, Spaniards, French, British, German, Swiss, Turks, and Syrio-Lebanese who were attracted to the Argentine in its period of greatest immigration. They now form the basic component of the mixture that has made Argentina different from most other Latin countries.

In the middle class are Argentina's intellectuals. Though exact numbers cannot be determined they have an importance far beyond their numbers. Among the intellectuals are the top newspapermen, whose prestige is often higher than that of journalists in the United States; many of the professors and teachers who write the erudite articles in the magazines and the papers; the painters, sculptors, and top musicians. They correspond more to the intellectuals of France than to any such group in our country. There is hardly one who does not have the title of Doctor, the term being used by almost every Argentine who gains a university degree. Practically every Argentine intellectual will have a book or two to his credit, even though it may have been published privately.

This group of Argentina's middle class might be said to be essentially pro-democratic and liberal in ideas on

politics as well as on books, music, art. They are the most receptive to new ideas, to new approaches and concepts even though more conservative than might be supposed.

The non-intellectual Argentine middle class, as we have noted, is generally far more concerned with itself than with political progress and the democratic freedom. They may in a sense ape the possessions, customs, and the manners of the *estancia*-owning families from the very form of writing its family names down to copying the style of the gowns so elegantly displayed in the pages of the magazines *Atlantida* and *El Hogar*. But most members of the upper middle class realize that it is impossible for them to reach a position comparable to that of the great landowners or of those fashionable families that have inherited generations of wealth.

The upper middle-class Argentine may buy acreage out in the provinces, but rarely will he feel able to build a large *estancia* house or maintain the style of even the lesser *estancia* owner, no matter what he manages to accumulate. The age when new families can be added to the upper stratum has ended. New membership in the Jockey Club, for example, is confined to members' families and to the diplomatic group.

Argentina's middle class sets its own basis of morality and ambition as well as the daily conduct of life. It includes the most strongly nationalistic—hence anti-U.S.—Argentines, as well as many who admire the things we make if not the things we do. Thus many of the appeals for the made-in-U.S.A. devices that provide comforts and better living have a strong appeal to Argentine middle class men and women—as witness the successful adver-

tisements for refrigerators and cars which fill the pages of the Argentine magazines.

While many American publications stress self-help, publish do-it-yourself articles, and advocate household budgets and the apportionment of income to this and that purpose, most Argentines simply do not believe in such things. They may have their own concept of what they will spend for certain items, but their ideas are not based on the methodical apportionment of many of our families.

The reason the middle class is now considered the key to so much that is happening in Argentina lies in these factors:

1. Perón's first appeal for support was established on opposition to the wealthy *estancieros*. They were a national target, and they have not fought back or struggled with effective results. Instead, they have been content to return to their mansions and their clubs and sit things out.

2. More recently Perón has attacked the industrialists who may be middle class or of the top wealthy group. Often it is hard to distinguish. In Buenos Aires the concentration of wealth is not generally as apparent as it is on the *estancias*. The great mansions in which so many of the landed aristocracy lived are gradually disappearing, and they were conspicuous and pretentious symbols of wealth.

3. The working class, both in the city and on the *estancias*, has received almost all the benefits that Perón can provide without putting the country into bankruptcy. Yet while mass appeals have been to the *descamisados*, a good proportion of his followers came from white-collar, government employees.

4. Therefore the only group with undoubted resources and economic power plus the ability to change things is the middle class. In the United States the middle class has been the basis of our growth and development.

Hitler made Germany's frustrated middle class the basis for his rise to power. Some Argentine observers feel that the revolution of 1943 was a middle-class seizure of power from the landed oligarchy.

Ysabel Rennie, for example, explains: "Denied entrance by the front door, the middle class entered by the rear. Thirteen years of fraud and systematic frustration had left the democratic majority among Argentina's middle class millions disorganized and without real hope of power. The 30's had also convinced a majority of the middle class that democracy was a cheat. In the Army hierarchy, which was a stronghold of the Argentine bourgeoisie, middle class resentment, nationalism, and a belief in direct action fused. The Army dictatorship was middle class because its dictators were middle class; their outlook bourgeois: they did not love the landed oligarchy or the economic regime this group stood for. They feared the working class and were determined to make only such concessions as were necessary in order to keep it satisfied without altering in any way its fundamental position of subservience.

"They feared leftist revolutionary ideologies which could in any way rob them—the middle class—of their comfort and prerogatives. They feared the post-war for what it could bring of social unrest and alien doctrines. . . . There was nothing they feared more than a working-class revolution."

Whether this explanation holds or not, the fact is that

today it is the middle class to which Perón and the militarists are turning in order to achieve the vitally-needed balance of power in the event that labor, the Army, and the Church become more restive.

Many middle-class Argentines have, in recent years, become cynical and disillusioned with the military government which dominates them. They have not had the comparative increases in earning power, housing, and social benefits which the poorer classes have gained.

Many members of the middle class have become resigned. Others are beginning to realize in some degree their own latent power. A good deal of the opposition, particularly that which stems from the opposition political parties, could be said to be middle-class opposition. So today it is the middle class to whom the propaganda is now beginning to appeal, the middle class which many Argentine observers today feel may hold the true balance of power.

How the Argentines Live

PICK UP a copy of the Argentine magazine *El Hogar*—The Hearth. Leaf through its multicolored pictures of homes and apartments. Read the elaborate, detailed descriptions of these new places.

“With the maximum comfort,” numerous advertisements say, describing apartments with “elegant atmosphere, ample and numerous closets, air-conditioning, hot water, electric refrigeration, kitchen and pantry, laundry and centralized drying room, built-in incinerators.”

With the kind of glowing prose which marks copywriters the hemisphere over, these advertisements describe the “living-room” (there is no equivalent word in Spanish so Argentines use the English which they pronounce “lee-ving”), the *comedor* or dining room, the *dormitorios* or bedrooms, the large “poetic garden” with

its "play space and toys for the entertainment of your children." There is a modern solarium on the terrace for your sunbath, a master antenna for your radio. And all of this in Buenos Aires' smartest location.

Such an apartment is, of course, not the apartment of the typical Argentine city dweller. No more would the model in *House Beautiful* or *Better Homes and Gardens* be the typical North American's apartment. But this description does pretty well represent the ideal of what a good many Argentines would like to have—and what an increasing number of wealthy urban Argentines do have, or are actively in the market for.

How the Argentines live, and how they would *like* to live, provide an important clue to their character, what they are, and what they want.

In examining how they live we must once again make clear distinctions among the *porteños* of Buenos Aires, the residents of the secondary cities, and those who live on the land, as well as among the Argentines of wealth, the middle class, and the worker group.

The description of the luxury apartment in *El Hogar* is extremely significant because it stresses what almost every Argentine, whatever his means or whatever his location, seeks most: "Maximum comfort." This idea remains constant, though the standards of what constitutes comfort vary. In the past, even lower-middle income Argentines—i.e., minor officials, small shopkeepers, etc.—had servants. Often they hired immigrants recently arrived from Spain or Italy, who would work for board, room, and wages lower than even the lowest minimums. Since Argentine families generally included several children, help was essential. In the lower middle-class fam-

ilies, the maid was often a slave of all work. She had an ugly little room, generally furnished with only an iron bed and a dresser. She waited on the family day and night and rarely expected more than a day off every two weeks. Often, despite her tiny stipend, she managed to save enough to buy a ticket so that a relative from the old country could come over to begin the same upward climb.

Servants are more expensive today. But percentage-wise, far more Argentines have them than North Americans.

The trend toward apartment-living became evident as Buenos Aires' population began swelling. More and more Argentines wanted to live in the city, for work or pleasure. The influx of city-dwelling Europeans, particularly the French, whose standards were always considered chic, hastened the trend.

As a result, Argentines in Buenos Aires, and many of the secondary cities—Córdoba, Rosario, Bahía Blanca, Mendoza, Mar del Plata—have erected more modern apartments than almost any other kind of structure. Hundreds of thousands of Argentines who do not want to live within the city limits have been building small modern houses in the suburbs. Near the capital they extend for miles to the north, west, and south. In the secondary cities they have moved right out into pasture land. The actual need for living quarters is not the only reason for the rush of apartment building. Many Argentines feel that if it is not possible to invest in land, an apartment house is the next best thing.

The apartments and homes Argentines build are likely to be larger than ours, for average families are bigger. Rooms are more spacious, ceilings higher. Heavy doors,

tile walls and floors, solid knobs and plates have been dressed up in a modern motif though retaining their Spanish heritage. Even the courtyard patio has a new twist: it is now an indoor garden.

The modern houses have wide windows and balconies. They are built back from the street instead of flush with the sidewalk as of old, and many of them have swimming pools on their roofs. Homes are now being built to give the *señora* of the house more of an opportunity to do some of her own work with the labor-saving devices that Argentines eagerly seek.

In an Argentine apartment, the size of the kitchen is often regarded as a key to a *señora's* respectability. All over Buenos Aires tiny *garçonnières*, where Argentine males carry on their extra-curricular dalliances, have kitchens not much bigger than telephone booths. The elevators of these buildings are only large enough for two so as to avoid embarrassing encounters. But the average better Argentine apartment or house has a kitchen far larger than most of ours. The modern kitchen is also likely to have far more storage space, marble topped tables and counters, built-in incinerator and often an electric instead of a gas stove.

North Americans, however, are likely to feel that many Argentine homes are cold both in style and actual temperature. Argentines prefer formal draperies, large, heavy, overstuffed furniture, lamps with many frills and flounces, and less use of color and art on the walls. As in the United States, home decorating and styling tastes have been strongly influenced by the films. Argentine movies often follow styles they have adopted from American pictures, so much so that often film interiors do not

resemble actual Argentine rooms at all. But since life often imitates the movies, some of the ideas introduced on the screen are beginning to appear in the new homes and apartments.

Every *porteño* who can afford it wants to live in the Barrio Norte, the smartest residential district. Many of its newest, most expensive buildings have replaced wealthy town houses which can no longer be adequately staffed and maintained and on which taxes are becoming prohibitive. Thousands of older homes have been converted to schools, government institutions, or embassies—our own United States Embassy residence is the former Alvear-Bosch family's mansion.

Many of these fabulous places were originally done in French style and resembled Parisian mansions. Furniture was generally imported. Dining rooms might easily seat up to fifty. Formal ballrooms were not uncommon, for entertaining away from home was rare.

One reason Argentines have been able to move ahead so fast with their building is that throughout most of the country temperatures do not get as cold as in the United States. Buildings are lighter, central heating less complex, cellars smaller. As a result, reinforced concrete is widely used. With it the Argentines and Europeans working in the country have done startling things.

The French- and Italian-influenced modern school was already firmly entrenched when the big Argentine urban building program got under way. As a result, the work of architects and planners is comparatively free of incongruous relics of the past. Ultra-modern buildings, even now, are unusual in many United States cities. In Buenos Aires, as in Rio, São Paulo, Mexico City, and elsewhere

in Latin America, almost nothing else has gone up in recent years.

The red-roofed, stucco-walled style we call Spanish is generally missing. They call it *Californiano* and avoid it.

Emphasis in new Argentine homes, office buildings, and public structures is on the crisp, the functional, and the contemporary. With concrete are combined glass brick, broad fenestration, sharp lines, and flat roofs. Even in the tallest structures steel beams are practically unknown. Argentines proudly boast that Buenos Aires' thirty-two-story Kavanagh Building was among the first to prove that skyscrapers could be built of reinforced concrete. With few open-hearth furnaces and no blast furnaces in Argentina, builders had to find materials other than steel. Concrete proved ideal, and Argentina has an abundance of cement, gravel, and stone. Today in erecting most Argentine buildings concrete is usually mixed on the spot.

Use of hollow tile, masonry, and other materials in original ways was also dictated by necessity. True, there were no permit restrictions on new construction during World War II, but inability to get essentials from the States or Europe did tax resources. In many cases, fugitives from Hitler turned their talents to producing things Argentina formerly imported. Argentines, many of whom were trained in the United States, also took advantage of the situation to try their new theories. United States firms with branch plants in Argentina found they could locally create tubs, hardware, and other fixtures considered impossible to make only a few months before Pearl Harbor. Today, practically every construction item except elevators is produced in Argentina.

Argentines have had a stronger sense of drama than we in setting off their buildings. Property is generally selected with an eye toward achieving an effect on the passerby, fully as much as on the occupant. Hollywood bathrooms, streamlined kitchens, and rumpus-room gadgetry which run our costs upward are not used. Elbow-room, however, is far more generous than in comparable units in the United States. Many Argentines get claustrophobia when they first see our hotels and apartments. Two laps around your room in the Plaza or the Alvear Palace Hotels in Buenos Aires seem nearly a quarter mile.

Labor to do the building job has also proven surprisingly ingenious, especially considering the limited number of technical schools. Complex craft restrictions and strikes which affected much of our building were infrequent in Argentina. Construction trades, as with us, are well organized. But there are fewer rules and less observance to those that exist.

The Argentine artisan refuses to be regimented either by boss or union. It is difficult to make him stick to a specified number of bricks per load, or to blueprints, either. But if he is enthusiastic and proud of the work, he achieves speed and perfection without overtime, bonuses, or bribes.

Workmanship can be excellent—and it can be very bad. Rarely is it impersonal: it shows the fierce individuality of the builders. Many masons are Italians and Poles; other laborers come from Galicia in Spain. They work hard with noisy cheerfulness. They cook their steaks at mid-day, bringing the famous Argentine rolls, their own salads, fruits, and a bottle of red wine. They may take

two hours for lunch and finish with a siesta—stretched out on the sidewalk if no other place is handy. But they do a good job, topping off the construction with a palm branch to show they have finished. The end of a job calls for an *asado*, or barbecue celebration.

Generally the person in charge of building is the architect who works with a construction firm. Architects often arrange the financing and then put up big signboards in front of the building explaining their role. Every subcontractor also displays his name, for Argentines take great pride in their building achievement. The architect also signs his name on the front of the structure, a permanent record of his genius (or lack of it) that many feel encourages public interest in better architectural design.

In much of the smaller home construction around Buenos Aires, the owner often pitches in. Sometimes he hires himself a foreman and a few assistants, sketches a plan on the back of an old envelope, and gets things done over a long series of week-ends.

When visitors from the United States express surprise at the modernity of Buenos Aires building, Argentines will say they are an expression of cultural maturity, "not the technological wealth you admittedly possess."

"Our emergence seems sudden," they add, "but much spadework is due to our *avant-garde* writers, artists, and intellectuals. Usually, they were willing to accept theories which, often as not, were developed, but not always carried out, in Europe or in North America—Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas, for example."

When the discussion continues Argentines are willing to concede that they still have a long way to go before

they solve their housing problem. Despite the vast amount of building, apartments and homes are extremely difficult to find, both in Buenos Aires and secondary cities. This is particularly true of apartments, where rents have been officially set at a low figure. One of the first steps taken by the military government after it gained power was to order an automatic 20 per cent reduction for all tenants—and at the same time to require that certain minimum standards of heat, light, and maintenance be supplied. Tenants gleefully pointed out that this, at least, was one worth-while act of the militarists. Property-owners, however, were angry, particularly when they found there were no exceptions for those who are incapable of meeting the costs.

Frequently the Argentine who needs a place to live has to pay "key money," thus giving owners their profits despite the squeeze imposed as rising costs and low-rent ceilings get closer.

Yet despite difficulties, Argentines continue to buy and build apartments. Besides the fact that they consider them good investments, they are the easiest item in which to invest. Investors can find page after page of land and building advertisements. Auctions are held daily. Realty deals are constantly reported. Most Argentines feel that the ownership of property serves as a hedge against inflation. They are convinced that the more prices go up, the more the value of land and buildings will rise, in even greater proportion.

Some feel the great national mortgage banks have helped keep Argentina's inflation spiraling by their liberality in granting mortgages. Yet, many an Argentine is certain that good property will more than repay its com-

plete investment in ten years. Some, in fact, have done it in less. The important trend now is toward what is known as "*propiedad horizontal*"—in other words, co-operative ownership.

The Argentine's love of chance is shown by one little-known fact about property purchase. Many of the mortgage institutions hold lotteries semi-annually. If your mortgage number is one of the scores drawn, your mortgage is publicly burned and the property you are purchasing is yours. The institution takes full-page ads to advertise winners.

The tremendous growth of suburban living around Buenos Aires and other big Argentine cities has many a similarity to and many a difference from such life in the United States. Once Buenos Aires' suburbs were considered distant. Now they are part of the metropolitan area with every square meter of land daily becoming more valuable.

The after-office commuter rush at Presidente Perón Station is almost as busy as Grand Central or the Long Island Railroad. You ride for twenty to twenty-five minutes—and you are in Olivos, one of the typical Buenos Aires suburbs. It is not unlike Great Neck or New Rochelle around New York, Winnetka near Chicago, and Grosse Pointe near Detroit.

Not so many years ago most Argentine suburbanites were fairly well-to-do foreigners. Today, more and more *porteños* have found living away from the center of town desirable. And the commuter pattern gets more like that in the United States. Not so long ago, many an Argentine went home for lunch, but few do any more, for transportation is increasingly difficult. And like many of

our suburbanites, the suburban resident generally sees little of his community other than its shopping district, its central plaza filled with school children in white smocks, his own street, and his route to town. Occasionally, he passes the time of day with his neighbors or goes to his local club for relaxation.

But his major interest is his home. Suburban houses around Argentine cities are generally two stories high—the ranch style hasn't yet become popular. Argentine homes are built to the owner's personal tastes rather than to any mass-scale plan. Frequently they do not even conform to any elementary conception of zoning. There are no Levittowns, or any great uniformity of building or styling, even in the new Perón-planned villages. Two identical Argentine houses next to one another would be considered a concession to Detroit belt-line production methods.

Argentines love parquet or tiled floors, terrazzo or marble stairways and house fronts, and shiny surfaces. Like as not, the Argentine suburban home has no central furnace, although they are coming in. Probably it will not even have a cellar, but the garage will be ample to store practically all the impedimenta an Argentine family accumulates, plus the bottled gas that is used in many suburbs where there are no central mains.

Most Argentine suburban homes also have balconies, either to the front or back, adorned with flowering vines. This is also standard in town apartments, for the owner's sun bathing, and for washing and drying clothes. Having laundry done at home or having a laundress come in once or twice a week is customary.

Rare is the Argentine home without a garden, tiny as

it may be. The owner generally has a gardener to cut the front lawn and neatly prune the trees to their last inch to encourage faster growth.

When the *señora* of the house wants to go shopping in Olivos she has her choice of thirty-three groceries and thirty-four butcher shops, but there's not a single supermarket anywhere. The idea has never been tried, although it is successful in Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, and other Latin countries. There are several *farmacias*, or drug-stores—but none with soda fountains. Beauty parlors are prevalent, but most suburbanites prefer those in town.

The real change, however, is that in contrast to bygone days, the *señora* herself frequently goes to the grocer rather than simply trusting her maid. "*Pero*, with prices what they are," she will tell you, "even we Argentines have to worry about getting the best possible value."

The suburban resident may contribute to some of the local charity drives, although far less than in a typical United States community. He will also be far less likely to participate in community organizations, parent-teacher associations, or similar civic affairs. Not many such groups exist. During the war the British had a Community Council in Olivos to raise funds and knit socks for their soldiers, but today the town has no sizeable woman's club.

The Peronista Party has, however, seen to it that every community in Argentina has its branch. The Peronista Women's Party is well-organized.

Many an Argentine buys or rents a place in the country for a "*casa del week-end*." (Since *fin de semana* does not have the same connotation, the Argentines have adopted "week-end" directly from English.) He plants trees, fences off his area, and builds accommodations for

guests, who will probably be his children, grandchildren, and other members of the family.

His retreat is hardly likely to be any quieter than that in town. "But," he will tell you, "this noise is my own noise and that of my family. And, after all, that is something no man regrets having."

Improved worker housing is a prime government objective. While there are fewer outright slum areas in the center of Buenos Aires than in many of our own cities, there are districts where housing conditions are deplorable. Moreover, housing costs in Argentina have always been far greater in proportion to income than those in the United States. This is one reason why many Argentines, including white-collar workers and often young middle-class couples, live with their parents.

Before the Perón Government came into power, the Argentine economist and statistician, Alejandro H. Bunge, reported that from 140,000 to 150,000 Buenos Aires laboring families lived in overcrowded, monotonous tenements. Often these are set around a big patio. A family may have only a single room or two for which they pay a fifth to a third of the husband's salary. Some tenements in the older waterfront area of the Boca have, in the past, crowded as many as 120 lodgers into ten rooms—something that would be hard to beat in Moscow or in Manhattan's Puerto Rican districts. Three or four persons to a room is still not infrequent in some tenements. Occupants share with other tenants the use of kitchens, the water closet and the primitive trickling cold shower.

There is little wonder why many an Argentine worker buys his weekly lottery ticket in the hope that "someday, somehow, he will win and be able to buy his own house."

Many workers hungry for their own places have started to build with the most haphazard material. Often they buy a lot far from their place of employment or band together to buy land and supplies. When one room or two are finished they move in, then they save to add another and another. Meanwhile, they seek what relaxation they can at the movies, the café, the *confitería* or the club—all of which offer an escape, even though temporary.

Workers' housing conditions in Buenos Aires have been so bad, in fact, that one of the first steps taken by the military government was to make some rather dramatic moves to show that it was at least proceeding in the right direction. In December, 1943, half a billion *pesos* were appropriated for low-cost housing. Reduced taxes and interest rates, plus preferential allocations of materials and small-house plans were offered those who would immediately proceed with building. As of the beginning of 1952, no one was sure how much of this housing was ever actually completed, or to how many families Perón helped give new quarters. Several attractive-looking worker villages were constructed near the new broad Avenida General Paz, which circles Buenos Aires. Additionally, a large number of workers' apartment houses similar to those found around Rome and other Italian cities were erected. Others are still rising. Not unnaturally, favored party followers have had first choice of quarters to show what all faithful peronistas may some day expect.

In recent years, an attempt has been made to get as many workers as possible away from the capital's center. As one official explained: "Providing housing in suburban areas where factories have also been built may also

help our urban transport problem. It is your Greenbelt idea in actual practice."

Workers' houses being built on the outskirts of the capital are being reproduced in many of the smaller communities. While there are no large cooperative housing developments like those found around New York, neither are there row houses as in Philadelphia and Baltimore. The first public housing project built in the Western Hemisphere by a municipal government was constructed in Buenos Aires in 1910. But housing never has been able to keep up with the community's growth. In 1945 the military government set up a new federal housing agency under the Administración Nacional de La Vivienda (National Housing Administration) designed to build twenty thousand new homes yearly for both urban and rural workers. But these have hardly met the demand. New workers' apartment houses are usually eight to ten stories, simply and sturdily built. The grounds, fresh with the newness of landscaping, include an inevitable playground and the sign: "In the new Argentina Perón is creating, only the children are privileged."

Chapter V

The Capital of the Argentine

IF THE *porteños* and the growing middle class are the new, vital force in Argentina, then the city of Buenos Aires can be said to be their center, for they have made their capital into a unique metropolis—and Buenos Aires, in turn has helped mold succeeding generations of its residents.

Physically, they realize, Buenos Aires lacks the breathtaking bays, and the sheer, precipitate beauty of Sugar Loaf mountain which stands guard at the entrance to the harbor of Rio de Janeiro, capital of Brazil. They know it hasn't the towering mountain backdrop of Chile's capital of Santiago across the Andes from Argentina. But, they insist, neither has Buenos Aires the lazy, indolent air of many another Latin American metropolis.

If you want to flatter a *porteño*, particularly if he comes

from the middle class, then you will tell him at once that Buenos Aires looks much like Paris. You will point out how even its tall, light-clustered lampposts, its street signs and sidewalk cafés resemble the "City of Light." You will admire its older buildings and shops, its *confiterías*, the vast Mercado del Plata, the central produce market where cabbages and tomatoes, meat and roasting chickens are displayed the way Cartier shows diamonds.

Driving in from the airport over the cobbled streets of the suburbs, which also have the look of Paris, you will marvel over the fact that the Argentine capital covers more land than any other city in the southern Americas—even more, it is said, than sprawling Los Angeles.

Buenos Aires gives an impression of space in its broad new *avenidas*, its far-flung residential neighborhoods, the sweep of its tree-filled squares and plazas. The resemblance shows in its two great Diagonals, broad avenues laid out like the spokes of a wheel from the central Plaza de Mayo, cutting across the regular squares. And the *porteño* likes to think that outlying areas near Palermo Park look like Paris' Bois de Boulogne. Here are some of the town's more imposing mansions, and many ultra-modern apartment dwellings which rival our most spectacular new architectural designs.

If you want to upset a *porteño*, tell him Buenos Aires is like Chicago in its vast stockyards and meat-packing plants, in its flatness, in the brashness of its politicians, and, of course, in its hustle and bustle, pride in accomplishment, and constant desire for the newest and best.

Like Chicago, Buenos Aires was constructed on a waterfront so wide that you cannot see the other side. The

Rio de la Plata, the Silver River, is neither silver nor a river. Rather, it is an arm of the Atlantic Ocean, an estuary into which the Paraná and Uruguay rivers pour their waters heavy with top soil. Churned with sea water, this mixture produces an ugly brownish color. Optimistic Spaniards, who believed the river would lead them to rich silver mines, gave it its name.

* Though Buenos Aires' early development was not favored by natural beauty, it was aided by a natural central location. *Porteños* recall Buenos Aires actually had two beginnings. In 1536, Pedro de Mendoza arrived from Spain with an imposing expedition of some two thousand colonists to settle in the region. Plagued by famine, pestilence, and Indians, Mendoza abandoned the land and sailed for home with most of the surviving expedition members. In 1580, Juan de Garay began anew. Gradually the town began growing.

* Early in the eighteenth century Buenos Aires was a sprawling village of mud and straw huts, incomparably poorer in material goods and cultural development than such renowned centers of wealth, religion, and art as Mexico City and Lima. As a dependency of the Viceroyalty of Peru it was restricted and discriminated against in favor of Lima. But in 1776 the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata was created, with Buenos Aires as its capital. With this political, economic, and social impetus the town developed swiftly, and came into its own as a port.

In the nineteenth century, railroads pushed out from Buenos Aires to provincial capitals, connecting them with the port city but not with each other. Rail lines and highways were centered in Buenos Aires, and cross traffic was difficult. To get from one part of the country to an-

other one had to go first to Buenos Aires and proceed from there. Now air travel is developing in the interior, bringing provincial cities closer together. And this has reduced the immediate need for many cross-country highways.

The military government seeks to foster this trend. It has lavished some of its most elaborate construction on a brand new General Pistarini Airport at Ezeiza, some forty minutes from the center of Buenos Aires over the broad highway that rings the city. This airport's size equals any in the States, including New York's vast Idlewild, and is regarded as a Perón showcase. Some 6,500 acres of the development's total 17,300 are devoted to the airport itself. The rest of the area features four huge swimming pools, a large children's vacation camp and a model village for airport employees outfitted in every detail. Although traffic is nowhere as great as at big United States fields, Pistarini Airport has a vast array of buildings designed to prove the boast that it is the finest and most completely equipped in the Americas. An eight-story aviation-office building is set at one end of the field. Nearby is a large new hotel. Shops of all kinds supply travelers and the constant stream of visitors, who number thousands on holidays.

They stroll the promenade watching the planes of Panagra, Scandinavian Airlines, Air France, British South American, Braniff, and their own Aerolineas Argentinas take off.

If the airport is the center of Buenos Aires' new air age, in town everything revolves around the Plaza de Mayo, for this is not only the center of the capital, but the hub of the Argentine republic.

The Casa Rosada, office of the President and traditional seat of government, stands at the eastern end of the Plaza. Tall, splendidly uniformed San Martín grenadiers guard its entrances. All Argentines know that the man who sits in the Casa Rosada and controls the Plaza de Mayo and the forces headquartered in the buildings around it, commands the power to rule them with a force possessed by few American heads of state.

On the President's right, as he surveys the Plaza, is the Banco de la Nación, the country's financial heart. Beyond it is the neo-classical Cathedral, seat of the power of the church and last resting place of Argentina's liberator, General San Martín. Directly across the Plaza is the Intendencia Municipal (municipal building), headquarters of the capital's government, its huge police force and its vast array of services. Next is the historic Cabildo, where revolutionists met on May 25, 1810, to set up Argentina's first government.

Round the streets of the Plaza scurry many of the *colectivos*, little jitney buses which drive in from their far-flung routes to the suburbs. Like Chicago's Loop, the Plaza is also a center for the giant busses which are patterned after those of Paris. Everyone calls them "man butchers," because they proceed with the recklessness of juggernauts.

It is in Plaza de Mayo that Perón makes his speeches. There victories are announced and solidified. There the nation's sorrow and triumphs are publicly exhibited. There the newest, biggest signboards proclaim the Argentines' loyalty to Perón or announce a new government drive. Strings of lights go up on national holidays; sym-

bols of mourning are displayed when a top official dies.

Manifestations and demonstrations are an important part of Argentina's political life. During the June 4 movement in 1943, the militarists marched into Buenos Aires and seized control with only a comparatively few shots fired. But *porteño* students had to do something more dramatic to demonstrate their feelings. So they overturned a number of busses and trolleys owned by a British company and set them afire. This was apparently intended to demonstrate that somehow they had been relieved of a foreign yoke. During an important state funeral at the Cathedral on the Plaza, students are likely to break the police line to draw the hearse themselves as a further expression of their feelings. None of these incidents compare to the paroxysm of peronista grief upon the death of Evita Perón on July 25, 1952. The whole country was plunged into mourning, paralyzing all normal activity. Outside the Ministry of Labor building hundreds of thousands waited for hours in rain and chill to file past her bier. Three thousand or more were injured and four died in the crush before the Army came to help the police maintain order.

Out from the Plaza stem the broad Diagonales Norte and Sud. A block away is the big ten-story headquarters of the First National Bank of Boston, which houses the United States Embassy offices.

A few blocks west runs the Avenida 9 de Julio, whose breadth of four hundred feet makes it one of the world's widest boulevards. Under the avenue are extensive underground parking areas—the inspiration, Argentines will

tell you, for the huge garage under Union Square in San Francisco. The center of the *avenida* is the Plaza de la Republica, marked by an immense obelisk commemorating the city's four-hundredth anniversary.

Porteños never seem to stop rebuilding their town.

Pavements are always torn up for some new project and construction proceeds endlessly. But to insure cleanliness little metal boxes are used to keep even the dirt from street excavations from littering the thoroughfares. During World War II when we halted building, "hot money" seeking unrestricted refuge kept Buenos Aires' boom going. For a time the biggest structures were erected by German, Spanish, Italian, and British firms, each contributing its national taste to the design. Public buildings were usually designed in the French style with heavy statues, tremendous chandeliers, and wide sweeping stairways. Massive Spanish doorways and fittings were still popular. Banks and offices appeared to come straight from Victorian London. Elaborate hotels and offices along tree-lined Avenida de Mayo looked like reproductions of Madrid buildings.

In the newer parts of the city, however, Argentines have built ultra-modern buildings in so-called Mediterranean Modern. Structures are lighter in color, and balconies are used not only as places where the resident can relax and as a device for achieving sharp, clean architectural lines. There are only a few skyscrapers. The tallest is a thirty-two-story apartment house on Plaza San Martín downtown. Such heights are not encouraged, however. Official regulations limit all buildings on the Diagonal Norte and the Avenida 9 de Julio to fifteen floors. Interestingly enough, many *porteños* say they do

not like skyscrapers so they avoid them, but in the next breath they explain that the soil of Buenos Aires is not reinforced by rock like Manhattan and could not support such structures.

The town has spread out—not up. To help solve the increasing traffic problem on its original narrow downtown streets Buenos Aires long ago began a unique city planning program. Every fourth street was cut back by an ingenious process that began as long as forty years ago. Markers were put down and owners informed that by a certain day fifteen to twenty years thereafter, all property extending beyond the line must be removed at the owner's expense. Thus as older structures were replaced, new buildings were built only up to the line.

Streets like Corrientes, now a theatrical center, Córdoba and Belgrano were widened in this way. It cost the city practically nothing but foresight. The Avenida 9 de Julio has been broadened in much the same fashion so that it will eventually run south from near Retiro Park, behind the port, as far as the great railroad station of Plaza Constitution. Argentines still chuckle over the fact that although private buildings had to move back out of the way the Ministry of Public Works put up its own skyscraper right in the path of the approaching avenue. The avenue now carefully detours the federal structure.

Since the income level of Buenos Aires is far above that of the interior, all of the largest shops are concentrated there. Most manufacturers have set up their plants around the city's outskirts, with the result that about 75 per cent of the nation's industrial establishments are located in the metropolitan area. Since the country's most enterprising citizens have concentrated in Buenos Aires,

they have often paid too little attention to secondary markets. Today, however, many Argentine businessmen are extending their operations to the interior, and with them have gone products and methods bearing the imprint of the metropolis.

Buenos Aires' modern look, its dynamic bustle, its air of progress, often make visitors forget that real growth and development are comparatively new. Away from the main avenues, the signs of the sleepy river town that was the old Argentine capital are still apparent. A visitor need only go to the southern, less stylish suburbs of Avellaneda and Lomas de Zamora to see the mud roads, and the high-ceilinged, windowless shops, and stuccoed houses with patios to note how Argentines have kept old and new side by side.

Although quick to adopt new things, and self-consciously desirous of being up to date, Argentina's *porteños* and provincials are also extremely traditional in some of their building tastes. The first floor of Harrod's great department store, for example, has hardly been changed since it was opened. It keeps its old-fashioned showcases, furniture, mirrors, and carved glass, for they have become symbols of distinction. The modern changes have been limited to the upper floors, lest anybody think that Harrod's could possibly resemble any of the vulgar new establishments. In this it has caught the spirit of the Argentine *porteño*—wanting change yet somehow fearing it, anxious for the new yet not willing to relinquish the old.

The Cities beyond the Capital

MOST TRAVELERS who come to Argentina for the first time make the mistake of arriving in Buenos Aires. A more interesting approach is to fly one of Panagra's big planes down the west coast of South America to Santiago, Chile. There the traveler can change to a local plane or train to cross the Andes and see the country. If you stop off in some of the provincial cities and get the feel of the broad *pampa*, you will have a better idea of what has supplied the riches that have made the capital, and Argentina, for Buenos Aires, dominant as it is, is not Argentina. The country's essential wealth has always come from the area outside its leading city. Yet we examine Buenos Aires and the other cities before we discuss the land because less than 26 per cent of the Argentine people live on the soil.

Rosario, second to the capital in industry and population, is Argentina's Chicago. Some 203 miles up the Rio Paraná from Buenos Aires, it is a great port and grain center. Ocean liners can reach its three-mile waterfront, and river boats bring Bolivian and Paraguayan products to its docks. Eight railroads enter the city, most of them from the grain districts.

Its tall grain elevators handle millions of tons a year, and its packing houses are enormous. There is hardly a *rosarino* who does not have something to do with grain or cattle products—the tanning of leather, canning, sausage-making, and preparation of meat for shipping abroad directly from Rosario.

The busy city looks like a copy of the capital: streets have the same names, cafés boast similar fittings, shops are branches of those in Buenos Aires. Its inhabitants, however, are not as smart or gay as the people in Buenos Aires. Rosarinos roll down their shop shutters not long after dark, and dine earlier than in Buenos Aires.

Rosario once aspired to national leadership and was considered as a possible federal capital. But its inhabitants do not feel the intense rivalry with Buenos Aires that, for example, the citizens of the port of Guayaquil, in Ecuador, feel about Quito. In some ways the *rosarino* considers himself superior to the *porteño* because, he says, "We have everything they have without the hustle and bustle."

They have built the country's best national modern art gallery, and one of the most original schools, the Escuela Experimental Carrasco in the workers' district of Alberdi. The marks of a good businesslike, comfort-loving, middle-

class population are everywhere—in the wide streets, the clean hotels, the expensive cars.

Some Argentines feel Rosario lacks the personality it should have, considering its economic importance.

Rosario, like Chicago, is a freshwater port, a great wheat and packing center. It is not the capital of its state but a town that has made its way by sheer commercial and industrial power, often against both local and federal politicians. Waldo Frank feels a telling analogy is in its architecture: "You can pick it out in the commercial and residential streets, among the still prevailing, hideous late nineteenth and early twentieth-century houses. It is flamboyant; it is not always good, it is probably never as good as the best new architecture in Mexico. But it is vitally poetic and full of promise. Surging dramatic towers, exterior spiral stairs, summing to impressiveness. The functional perpendicular of office buildings is somehow counter-balanced by the use of horizontal subsidiary forms that give the measure of the *pampa*."

Some visitors to Córdoba, who have heard native sons describe it as the Argentine Rome, the American Seville, and the City of Professors, are shocked to find it is no longer a sleepy colonial town. Crowded, rushing, and dynamic, Argentina's third city is located almost exactly in the center of the country in the broad valley of the Rio Primo. Around it are miles of rich wine and ranch country, within are booming industries. Yet its chief attractions consist in its colonial character and its proximity to the famous Córdoba hills, a popular and highly lucrative all-year-round vacationland. The *córdobes* have made *tourismo* one of their big industries.

Unlike most Argentine cities, which have a broad, flat appearance of regularity, Córdoba occupies a confined position as at the bottom of a well, among red clay hills that bury it under dark dust with every wind and mud with every rain. Most of its upper and lower classes are descendants of colonial Spaniards, who have preserved more of the good and the bad from those days than have any other Argentines. The middle class come from Italy, France, modern Spain, Poland, England, and Arabia. Assimilation is more complete than in any American city: the idea of separate neighborhoods for different nationalities is almost inconceivable to Córdobans—as it is to most Argentines.

Luis Guillermo Piazza, a *córdobes* who wrote about his city in the magazine *Americas*, admits that it is not nearly as cosmopolitan as the port cities. But for this reason, he says, *córdobes* always consider themselves more authentic Argentines, and speak mockingly of “the others,” “the ones from the port.” Their rivalry with the *porteños* is mutual and starts afresh every day. It dates from the Independence, when there were civil wars between the provinces and the port, and might be compared with the enmity between the North and South in the United States. Today the *córdobes*’ attitude is more like the attitude of Bostonians toward New Yorkers, one of irony and scorn rather than real dislike.

Despite the town’s progress and growth (to some 350,000 inhabitants) its people know each other better than in most cities. This is obvious to the visitor on the streets, in the parks, at the movies, and in the churches.

Few *córdobes* lunch out; the custom of going home to eat persists despite its inconvenience. As night falls the

people stroll along the Calle San Martín to see and be seen. The Spanish-American custom survives intact; the streets are closed to traffic in favor of wandering crowds.

Once the spiritual center of the country, Córdoba is conservative and staunchly Catholic. On Sunday, *córdobes* all go to Mass according to a timetable that varies inversely with age. The old go very early, the young as late as possible after the festivities of Saturday night. The sweet shops fill up at noon, and then everyone has a chance to look, talk, and even dance. At the siesta hour the young people drive or stroll in Sarmiento Park near the lake and wood. Great crowds pack into the *futbol* stadia. Later the movies draw their biggest crowds of the week, as thousands of families wind up their Sunday holiday.

Culturally the city's institutions are older than those anywhere in southern South America. Córdoba's famed university, part of the life of every *córdobes*, was founded in 1613. It typifies the complexity of the city and its people, which cannot be reduced to statistics or generalizations. From this new-old university have come all the doctors who have brought fame to Córdoba. In colonial days these "doctors" were theologians, who brought new life to church doctrines. Later they were lawyers, innumerable and renowned. Today they include engineers, architects, philosophers, physicians, accountants, and lawyers—everyone with a university degree is grouped under this respectful title. The Córdoba sense of humor has not overlooked this superabundance of graduates: all Argentines know the saying, "Once there was a Córdoba who was not a doctor."

Although realistic about their shortcomings, Guillermo

Piazza says: "*Córdobes* are imbued with localism and firmly believe the world ends at their boundary. Go to Buenos Aires? Just for a few days, long enough to have a good time. See Europe? A magnificent idea, but it is far, so expensive, and after all, one can find out all about it from books. Visit other Latin countries? Too typical, too native, too poor. Go to the United States? Why? What could one learn there? And besides, it is too rich."

If you approach Argentina from Santiago de Chile, your first stop on the eastern slopes of the Andes will be Mendoza. Patriotic Argentines consider it the cradle of the continent's liberty, for it was here, in 1817, that General José de San Martín trained his famous army of the Andes, which was to cross the mountains and liberate Chile and Peru.

Mendocinos appropriately call their town the "Garden of the Andes." The products of their gardens—wine, grapes, and fruits—are the thriving industry of the Mendoza region. Over three hundred years ago the Spaniards brought grapevines from Europe and planted them on terraces watered by the Inca Indian irrigation systems. *Mendocinos* channeled the mountain snows into canals to develop hundreds of orchards. They claim their famous wines and grapes can hardly be bettered by France, and brag that their grapes are sent as far afield as the smart Madison Avenue grocery shops in New York.

The town of Mendoza (population 109,879) is so thickly planted with trees it looks like a park—clean, green, and full of life. Small irrigation ditches along many of its streets water the sturdy trees and countless gardens. After the disastrous earthquake of 1861 the town had to

be almost completely rebuilt. Buildings are low, and houses outside the central part of the city are made of unbaked tiles for greater earthquake resistance.

Chiefly of Italian and Spanish descent, the inhabitants are the most progressive and friendly of all provincial Argentines. They seem happier, less worried and prejudiced than the Córdobaans. They love to entertain, and their town has become quite a tourist center. Besides its wine and grapes, it features mild, dry days, vivid sun and skies, and thermal springs.

The port of Bahía Blanca, on the southern edge of the *pampas*, is the most important Argentine city below Buenos Aires. Five hundred and sixty miles south of the capital, it has become the nerve center for the whole of Patagonia, which stretches west to Chile and south to Cape Horn.

To guard against a Brazilian invasion, General Rivadavia built a fort at Bahía Blanca in 1828. It became a center of local campaigns against the Indians. In 1838 a great Italian immigration began, largely from Genoa, which contributed to the agricultural development of the area.

Now its 106,258 inhabitants like to call their port the Liverpool of Argentina. From its grain elevators and docks are shipped great bales of Patagonian wool, oil, hides, wheat. The town, with its port and its hinterland, has an authority of its own, a lesser but definite power behind it.

The capital of the wealthy province of Buenos Aires is La Plata, just thirty-five miles southeast of Buenos Aires. When the latter was named national capital in 1880, citizens decided to build a new town for their provincial

capital. They planned a model municipality, built on a perfect three-mile square transversed by broad diagonals.

Buenos Aires is too close for La Plata to escape its shadow. But its 217,738 people are proud of its fine buildings, large plazas and parks, excellent observatory, unique Museum of Natural History, its famous university, and its technical schools for women.

Its port, one of the best in the republic, ships meat, gasoline, and hides. Many industries, including Swift and Armour, have built plants in La Plata to avoid crowded Buenos Aires. La Plata refines the oil and processes the meat it ships.

The seaside resort of Mar del Plata might have been mentioned in the chapter on Buenos Aires. But when half a million people arrive every summer to swell its normal population of one hundred thousand, it becomes one of the larger cities of the republic. Eighty years ago it was a fort where neighboring *estancieros* found refuge from the Indians; today it is the largest, richest, most ostentatious resort in South America. Two-hundred fifty miles south of the capital, Mar del Plata has become an Argentine tradition.

After the enterprising landowner Patricio Peralta Ramos opened its first bathing beach in 1887, the well-planned town became the summer abode of the first families of Argentina. They, and the *nouveaux riches* who followed, built luxurious homes more like suburban mansions than beach houses. Now the city clerks, salesgirls, and businessmen with large families also flock to Mar del Plata beaches. There are hundreds of pensions and inexpensive hotels as well as the fashionable and expensive hotels. Trains, busses, cars, and planes run day and night

between the capital and its resort during December to March, the mid-summer season.

Many Argentines prefer to live in the provincial cities rather than in Buenos Aires. Older people especially are content to accept what they have, refusing to be disturbed by the speed and bustle, the superiority and overriding manner of the *porteño*. "We feel peace, quiet, and tranquillity are our greatest assets," they say. "If Perón lets us live without molestation, we are willing to go along."

Yet when the provincial city-dweller moves to the metropolis his ambition is aroused. He probably becomes one of the most active members of a political group or labor union. He starts reading the newspapers more carefully. When he hears of plans for new factories he is sure Argentina is on the march toward industrial greatness, for what he sees, in contrast to his home town, convinces him that Buenos Aires is the world's greatest city. And so more and more provincials join the move to the capital.

Chapter VII

Where the Argentines Come From

A FAVORITE characterization of Argentina heard in other Latin American countries is that it is an American nation financed with British capital and peopled with Italians who speak bad Spanish. This evaluation is somewhat exaggerated, but it contains much truth. Argentina is not only a great crucible which has fused her people into a new group; it is a melting pot, still bubbling furiously, in which the citizen's country of origin is frequently a more decisive influence in determining his daily pattern of thought and activity than his country of adoption.

Not until this century did a new Argentine type emerge—a combination of recent European immigrants and the *criollos*, Argentines of Spanish decent, and *mestizos*, of mixed Spanish-Indian blood. As a people, Argentines are much younger than we. Some immigrants to Argentina

came just to do a job, intending to go home sooner or later, and retained their native customs and language through second and third generations. Many a third-generation Anglo-Argentine, for instance, still talks of "being out here," or "going back home," even though, in many cases, he has never been "home" in all his life.

Cut off from Europe during the war, sparked by nationalism, and affected by many other causes, the Argentine of today is still in the process of fusion. To understand him and perhaps know where he is going, we must find out where he came from.

The Europeans who first came to North America and those who went to Argentina were motivated by different reasons. The first Spaniards wanted gold and silver, not farmland and homes. They were soldiers, would-be gentlemen, and later merchants, notaries, and lawyers. Some of the earlier arrivals married Indians, and the *mestizos* resulted.

Argentina's greatest period of immigration—the nineteenth century—was also ours. But whereas our Homestead Act gave new arrivals land to develop, in Argentina the best land was already spoken for. Some immigrants of the late 1890's and early 1900's did get acreage in distant Mendoza and Santa Fé, but some of it was so poor it had to be abandoned.

Since most of the land was in the hands of the *estancieros*, immigrants became farm or city laborers, small tradesmen, or artisans. The *criollo* is traditionally a landlord or a *peon*: the immigrant and his sons became Argentina's middle class. It emerged as the country's most stable element. This group began producing a striking change in Argentina's social, cultural, political, and eco-

conomic life—and it was this change that pushed Argentina to first place in the southern half of the Western Hemisphere. The real significance of the middle class is only now becoming apparent.

Yet nowadays many Argentines frequently attribute all virtues to their country's ancient stock and all evils to recent immigrants. Perón, although of recent French-Italian stock, is guilty of this error. Other second- and third-generation Argentines follow the same line. You often hear the expression: *verdadero criollo* (truly creole) to indicate something that, by its very nature, is strong, brave, hearty, honest, and patriotic. Yet it is the recent immigrants who in the relatively short period of sixty years have changed Argentina from a mixed population like those in other Latin countries to an almost pure white group—alert, progressive, energetic.

Between 1857, when the first attempt was made to compile some immigration statistics, and 1930, when immigration was restricted, at least six million new people came into the country. Forty-two per cent were Italian, 33 per cent Spanish, 8 per cent Russian and Polish, 4 per cent German and Austro-Hungarian. The remaining 13 per cent included British, French, Portuguese, Uruguayans, Brazilians, Armenians, Lebanese, and Turks.

Numerically, the Italians have been most important, and their influence is everywhere. You notice it in the expressions, gestures, and accent of Argentine speech, in the names of the people, their food, their appearance. Italian habits and thinking have affected the Argentines. Yet Argentines have never been especially interested in learning Italian. They feel it is too close to their own

Spanish and that all important Italian literary and technical works are translated into Spanish.

Many of the Italians who came to Argentina in the last century crossed the Atlantic just to help harvest the wheat crop. Since seasons in Europe and South America are reversed, laborers sometimes spent one harvest season in the Old World, the next in the New. Those who came and went with the seasons were called *golondrinas*, swallows. Probably half of them stayed because they liked the country or just did not want to bother to return to Italy. Competition was keen, and opportunities few, but hundreds of thousands continued to come, legally or illegally.

The Italians blended readily with the Argentines, who shared their religion and temperament. They presented few problems of assimilation. Although they helped make Buenos Aires one of the world's largest cities, they did not live in "little Italys"—there is no Italian district in Buenos Aires and never has been. Even first-generation Italians often boast of having become hundred per cent Argentines. Second-generation Italians are definitely not Italian-Argentines—they are Argentine.

The early Italian immigrants—Lombards, Piedmontese, and Venetians—were chiefly peasants, laborers, and farmers. Many of them worked their way up from farm hands to tenant farmers, who treated the new lands with almost the same respect they might give their own. They became wheat, corn, and flax producers, or raised sugar and tobacco in San Luis, grapes in Mendoza. They got along well with British, Irish, and Scotch managers who had emigrated earlier. Some stayed near the cities to raise truck gardens, or process the food for export.

Southern Italians flocked to the cities, contributing in part to Argentina's urbanization problems of recent years. These were the artisans, skilled mechanics, bricklayers, masons, and factory workers. Many set up their own bakeries, tailor shops, small businesses. Frequently the Italians had the drive and ambition native *criollos* lacked. Starting humbly, some built fortunes in industrial construction work and in trade.

During World War II, Argentines of Italian stock showed much less sympathy for Mussolini than those of German background did for Hitler. There was no strongly Fascist newspaper in Argentina—the few Italian dailies were mostly anti-totalitarian. Many Argentines of Italian descent took a lead in Acción Argentina, a popular war-time democratic group which at one period included thousands of members. Some of them were arrested or ran into trouble with the government for their anti-totalitarian activities. Again in contrast to the Germans, Italian immigrants rarely retained their native citizenship and did not finance organizations in their homeland.

The Spaniards who came to Argentina in the last fifty years were different from the Andalusian adventurers of the sixteenth century and from merchants and professionals who came from Castile and Aragon in colonial days. Many of the new arrivals were Basques from the western Pyrenees region of Spain, or *gallegos* from the far northwestern province and former kingdom of Galicia. Both groups were sober, hard-headed, hard-working people, who favored city life. Many are still humorously called *gallegos*—a term sometimes indiscriminately applied to all Spaniards. To an Argentine, a *gallego* is his servant, his apartment house porter, or his corner grocer.

He uses the term affectionately and perhaps a little contemptuously.

Since the advent of dictator Francisco Franco in Madrid, official Argentine relations with Spain have grown increasingly warm, though the cordiality freezes when one side or the other feels it is losing a commercial advantage. Even those Argentines who do not come from Spain have nurtured the idea of *hispanidad* and the cultural ties with the "Mother Country." It gives them a feeling of superiority useful in their own dealings with Chile, Peru, and Uruguay.

Spain has played up this feeling for all that it is worth. More and more Spanish theatrical companies have arrived in Buenos Aires in recent years to make extensive and expensive tours. Madrid stock companies have always been popular in Buenos Aires playhouses, but during the civil war the poverty and distress on the Iberian peninsula halted the flow. At the outset the traveling Spanish theatrical companies seemed innocent enough, but it was soon discovered that they served as propaganda agents for Franco. Their methods were not open or direct but a great many of the new jokes were directed against the United States. Radio programs put on by the Spanish companies sang of the glories of the old country and its happy life and introduced more criticism of Uncle Sam. Spanish films and newsreels, often given theater owners at reduced rates, aimed at cementing the ties between "Mother Spain and her children in the New World."

Under a special cultural accord, a flow of books, teachers, films, and periodicals moved across the South Atlantic. It worked well for Spain, but Argentina did not benefit proportionally. *La Prensa*, seeking to point this

out in its independent days, cited cases of incoming shipments of hundreds of thousands of Spanish books carefully selected to sell Franco's ideas. "The only Argentine publishers who can get anything going the other way," *Prensa* added, "are those who appear on United States and British blacklists for publishing Axis literature."

The influence of Spanish cultural institutions has also been strengthened. Spain fostered the idea that she was among the first to fight Communism, and that liberal winds from the United States in the North "might easily mean the breaking up of the old *estancias*."

While not as spectacular or as crude as the Nazis, Franco realized that even the slightly-faded grandes moved more freely in high places in Argentina than any other Spaniards. Under a cloak of culture they were welcomed in wealthy Argentine families, schools and churches. At first Perón approved of this, but he shifted his position as his program moved toward winning greater support of the masses. As a result, Franco's representatives no longer emphasize their nobility.

Far different from the Spanish is the British influence, which was long all out of proportion to the number of English who lived there. Bartolomé Mitre, President of Argentina from 1862-68, once said that Britain was the "principal factor in the country's political, social, and economic progress." The British did more than anyone else—including the "natives" as the English called them—to develop "the Argentine"—another British phrase. They built the railroads, the water works, the power plants, the trolley systems. They taught the *estancieros* how to breed their cattle and sheep, started cotton-raising, and carried Argentine goods to the rest of the world.

Britain's prestige began rising from the time the Spanish Armada suffered its famous defeat. In the past century, Argentina was Britain's principal source of meat and wheat. Men and money were needed to protect this vital life and trade line. The City of London, not Wall Street, became the key source of Argentine financing. We were too busy expanding and developing our own country to take any notice.

With every pound invested, more and more Britons crossed the South Atlantic. Some were contract men sent to do specific jobs. Others went to Argentina for lifetime careers, managing utilities, railroads, or retailing establishments. A United States businessman, amazed at seeing a London department store in Buenos Aires, was even more surprised to find the imposing Banco de Londres, Bank of London; *The Standard*, an English daily newspaper, now the accepted dean of the Argentine press; not to mention the British stenographers, clerks, and general managers in the railroad offices, the English shopgirls and English bosses in the department stores, and English superintendents in the packing plants.

Many English settled down permanently, buying land in the province of Buenos Aires and elsewhere on the *pampa*. But they often kept their ties with home and, like the Germans, maintained dual citizenship and traveled with both British and Argentine passports. Many Scottish and Welsh immigrants settled in the sheep-raising country of Southern Patagonia.

The Britons in Argentina introduced their ways and words. The Saturday noon closing hour custom became the *sábado inglés*, English Saturday. An Argentine's word of honor is the *palabra inglés*. When an Argentine wants

to tell you that he will be exactly on time instead of half an hour or an hour late as usual, he may pledge: "*hora inglés*," British time. The British introduced their sports and sports terms. They brought in *futbol* (soccer), golf, and tennis and helped develop Argentina's polo.

The English in Argentina considered themselves a race apart. They set up their own homes, clubs, and churches on the exact pattern of "home." Round Buenos Aires are suburbs with names like Hurlingham and Temperley.

Early in 1948, Sir Clive Baillieu, an old friend, came to the Argentine accompanied by Lady Baillieu as chief negotiator in the sale of the British railroads and the purchase of Argentine meat and grains.

The world grain market traditionally had been established by the Liverpool Stock Exchange, but so many economic dislocations had happened that quotations in Liverpool were no longer the criteria for the world grain markets. The Argentines had sold various grains to European countries at prices which were considerably higher than had been established internally in many countries of the world, including the United States.

It came to a question of arriving at a formula and we were instrumental in establishing one constituted by prices ruling at Chicago, plus cost to Gulf ports. This formula was agreed to by President Perón and resulted in the expedition of the trade agreement with Great Britain.

There was some criticism in England itself of the barter of capital assets for food commodities which would be in current consumption, but owing to the economic situation that was existent at the time it seemed a very sensible arrangement all the way around. The formula thus estab-

lished was also used afterward in several sales that Argentina made to the United States Armed Forces.

The practical English businessmen learned from experience what the Argentines wanted and would buy. Any British concern which packed its goods so carelessly that the product arrived smashed found that the British Consul General in Buenos Aires made certain the Board of Trade back in London heard about it. The Board—Britain's Ministry of Commerce—saw to it that the exporter reimbursed the injured importer and packed his product more carefully next time. The British Foreign Office negotiated treaties favorable to British manufacturers, provided them with essential information, and sent such star Empire salesmen as the Prince of Wales to learn to tango with the debutantes in Buenos Aires while persuading their fathers to buy British.

Since World War II Britain has lost much ground in Argentina. At one time a Briton discussing foreign affairs with an American could say: "You may take Canada from us, but you will never get the Argentine." Today Britain is no longer either the largest customer or the strongest influence on the Río de la Plata.

The Perón government purchased practically all the British railroads from their private owners. Many of the public utilities have also been taken over, often at the government's own price. The great British-Argentine newspaper and magazine empire, Editorial Haynes, which published the daily *El Mundo*, the magazines *El Hogar* and *Mundo Argentina*, and operated Radio *El Mundo* and its network, is now owned by prominent peronistas.

Many Britons who live in Argentina have watched

their superior position decline and doubt they will ever regain it. But the British influence will continue to be a strong factor in Argentine thinking and daily habits for a long time to come.

While the Irish who came to Argentina were never as powerful or numerous as the English, they were among the country's earliest agricultural settlers and their influence is felt in many ways. Early in the nineteenth century, when cattle were considered valuable only for their hides and tallow, most Argentine *peons* would brand, lasso, or skin the beasts, but they refused to dig or do any other work they thought beneath them. Irish immigrants, who were not bothered by the *criollo* scorn of manual labor, earned fantastic wages for digging ditches and building fences.

The Irish who worked hard did well. Many of them came earlier than the British and Italians, they were able to acquire land and marry Argentine girls with whom they had Catholicism in common. At home they might have been small farmers, clerks, or tradesmen, but in Argentina the Irish proudly represented the Empire. They forgot the traditional animosity toward Britain, and they and their descendants often took a lead in British community affairs.

You do not have to travel far on the *pampa* to encounter an Irish *estancia*, and the Irish brogue can be heard at many a country livestock show. The Buenos Aires telephone directory contains Irish names in nearly all professional and trade categories. Many of the Maloneys and O'Connors can only speak Spanish, but the Irish-*porteño* somehow seems to introduce a hint of the old country into the vernacular.

Numerically, the Germans have never been important in Argentina, but they have exercised a strong influence. They are chiefly concentrated in the northern territory of Misiones, where they mingle with the German colonists across the river in Brazil, and in the southern lake district, where their Chilean neighbors are also of German extraction. The Nazi Party announced in 1938 that there were 236,000 German residents in Argentina, and it tried to make each one an active propagandist.

Nazi influence rose as official representatives made German commercial, shipping, and banking houses an instrument of Hitler's policy. The two-hundred-odd German schools, which for years had taught their charges the glories of Germanic literature and arms, stressed the grandeur of Hitler and National Socialism. The German Embassy flooded the country with pro-Nazi material by subsidizing newspapers, movies, and publishing houses.

But many German-Argentines fought Hitler's propaganda. Among these were the refugees from Nazi Germany and Central Europe who came to Argentina in the thirties—probably around 65,000 altogether. Many of them remained in Buenos Aires or settled in provincial cities to start some of the new, smaller industries, the handicraft arts, and many smart continental style shops.

After Argentina finally declared war on Germany in March, 1945, the government seized the most valuable German properties, worth some \$40,000,000. But in many cases Nazi sympathizers were put back in charge. Senator Harley Kilgore's Military Affairs Committee reported that the Germans had more than \$250,000,000 in Argentina at the end of the war. The State Department's Blue Book on the Argentine situation in 1946 warned that the

Germans "possess today in Argentina the economic organization—industrial, commercial, and agricultural—which they need to provide a base for the reconstitution of German aggressive power."

Now the Nazi threat has been replaced by the Russian. Our officials encourage trade between Western Germany and Argentina. During 1951, it rose from the previous year's \$25,000,000 to \$82,800,000. Most of this trade skirted currency shortages and exchange regulations.

Despite Nazi influence in Argentina, there has never been a strong anti-Semitic feeling. There are estimated to be about four hundred thousand Jewish residents in the nation, about two-thirds of them in Buenos Aires. Some of them are of German descent, others Russian and Eastern European.

The stream of Jewish immigrants began coming to the Americas in 1889, as a result of the Russian pogroms of Alexander III. The first group to come to Argentina were city merchants, not farmers, but they were eager to work the land sold them by the Argentine consul in Paris. When they arrived they discovered that the properties they had bought were gone. After getting their money back, they made a colonization contract with an *estanciero* of Santa Fé and traveled north. There they found neither food nor shelter was available. They ate wormy flour and slept in wagons. They could not see their land nor get implements to work it. Many of their children died in an epidemic and were buried outside the railroad station. Some of the colonists returned to Buenos Aires; others stayed on, living on the charity of railroad workers and passengers.

Luckily a visitor came through the town and saw

their plight. He became concerned and hurried back to Europe to tell Baron Maurice de Hirsch, a multimillionaire financier and philanthropist, about it. Hirsch became interested, and founded the Jewish Colonization Association to help his persecuted fellow-Jews.

Their colonies were among the first to introduce cooperative dairy processing, a cheese industry, and related activities. Even today thousands of Jewish agricultural colonists remain on the land. In recent years more and more have left it for greater opportunities in the cities. Buenos Aires has many doctors, lawyers, and other middle-class Argentines of the Jewish faith whose parents or grandparents were among the agricultural settlers.

Those who have worked hard have found many opportunities. Some feel they have had more of a chance to get ahead than they would have had in the United States, where competition is keener. On the other hand many still live in poverty not unlike that of New York's lower East Side.

After the military officers assumed power in 1943, rabid nationalists in their camp let loose a wave of anti-Semitic activities. Nationalist newspapers ranted against the Jews, and extremists tar-bombed synagogues, Jewish newspapers, and shops. Unruly mobs broke up Jewish meetings and attacked the homes and offices of "Jews, Communists, and bankers," whom they linked as one. There was even talk of seizing Jewish farmlands, of expelling Jews from public offices, schools, and the professions. Gradually, however, those who led the anti-Semitic attacks lost ground as the government made it clear it did not favor the persecution of any racial group.

Now Perón has organized the Jewish community like

every other. So long as they do not oppose the regime, Argentine Jews feel they are "reasonably safe." This to a certain extent is a situation that applies to nearly everyone else. Argentines are not naturally anti-Semitic, nor do they have any strong religious or racial prejudices.

Another little-known, but important group in Argentina, are the Syrians, Arabs, Lebanese and others from the Middle East. Most Argentines call them all *turcos*. Argentina is said to have more than a million of them, never clearly classified or identified. They have learned Spanish easily—better, many say, than most foreigners who come to Argentina. A large number have married into lower middle-class Argentine families. Many are keen businessmen and have gone into textiles, retailing, and smaller types of manufacturing. They have not been active politically, and for a long time have kept strictly to their own organizations. But they are a vital group in Argentina.

In 1775, about one-third of the population was reportedly black. In 1825, a fourth of the province of Buenos Aires was colored. What happened to the Negroes has never been quite clear. Many people suspect the government quietly put as many as possible into dangerous military service where they got killed in fighting the Indians. In contrast to the States, the remaining blacks increased more slowly than the whites and were swallowed up by the growing population and waves of immigrants. As we have noted previously, there are hardly any full-blooded Negroes in Argentina today.

What are the possibilities of mass immigration in the future? "We would welcome one or two millions of Europe's starving men," Perón declared in 1946. His five-

year-plan of that year set the goal at 5,000,000 immigrants—later reduced, on second thought, to 250,000. Technicians and skilled workers were preferred, and Spanish and Italians would be most easily absorbed, but there was to be no discrimination. "All we want are immigrants who are healthy and willing to work," said Miguel Miranda, Perón's economic adviser. At that time other government spokesmen spoke of opening Argentina's doors wide, of increasing its population to 40,000,000 in not too many years. A special immigration commission went to Europe to help sign up people.

The grand plans were mostly talk. Between 1945 and 1951, 2,500,000 people came to Argentina, but 1,500,000 left it. Most of those remaining were immigrants, though the number includes executives who came to work in foreign firms and embassies.

In February, 1952, Perón revised his immigration program. Henceforth Argentina would admit only agricultural workers and a few skilled technicians. The postwar flow of immigrants was attracted to Argentina's factories rather than farms, thereby creating a drain on food supplies and congested urban areas—especially around the capital. Foreigners arriving in Argentina from now on cannot take up residence within a radius of sixty miles of Buenos Aires and will have their passports endorsed so that they cannot obtain urban work.

It is one of Perón's greatest ambitions to have Argentina reach the twenty-million mark before his second term ends in 1958. He has, in various ways, sought to encourage larger families. However, the Argentine birth rate cannot be forced.

A survey by the United Nations Educational, Scien-

tific and Cultural Organization, released late in 1951, showed that during the first half of the century, Argentina led all the world's countries in population increases. Her figure was 251 per cent, followed by Cuba with 231 per cent, Colombia with 217 per cent, and Brazil with 191 per cent. Yet Argentina could, it is admitted, support millions more. Many still believe colonization the solution.

It is interesting to note that while Argentina has derived so much from Europe, her contributions have been small. Government gifts of wheat and other foods have gone to Italy, Spain, and France. There was even a contribution of forty thousand tons of wheat to Norway, although that country fought Argentina's admission to the United Nations at the San Francisco Conference.

One other foreign influence is worth noting—that of France. Argentina's attachment for France has been based more on sentiment than on immigration. France has never been one of Argentina's leading customers, and there have never been many French in the country. Though they have never launched a systematic drive to spread their culture, the French astutely and assiduously cultivated Argentine leaders of thought. For years the French-Argentine Institute has taught French and entertained visiting French lecturers. French dramatic companies headed by distinguished stars frequently come to the Argentine for a repertory season. When Maurice Chevalier arrived in 1951 he was treated like a hero. Stories and pictures in all Argentine papers recorded every move he made, dwelling especially on his visits to places he had not seen in twenty-five years.

The French tradition of freedom which aided us in our own revolution is, in no small measure, responsible for

the high regard in which France has always been held in Argentina. When Paris was liberated in 1944, the joy of Buenos Aires knew no bounds. As far as the *porteños* were concerned, it was the highlight of the war. Thousands of men and women streamed into the downtown streets, cafés, and theaters weeping with joy and happiness and singing the "Marseillaise." The military was determined to suppress any such demonstration, lest cheers for French democracy be transformed into a protest against the lack of it at home. Police drove their horses into the crowds, knocking many down indiscriminately as they sought to enforce decrees against unauthorized processions. The Argentines were undaunted, and kept on singing. A Mexico City newspaper cartoon of the event was captioned: "Paris has fallen, but fighting continues in the streets—of Buenos Aires."

In the latter part of the last century Argentines began adopting French manners and modes. Then Argentina was anxious to get rid of a feeling of inferiority as a rough, tough, pioneer country. As merchant steamers began making regular calls and more hotels, banks, and newspapers were established, Buenos Aires turned to Paris as guide in culture and civilization. Wealthy Argentine families made trips to France, bought French furniture, pictures and draperies, and carried them back to set up new homes in imitation of what they had seen abroad.

France's influence is still important in Argentina. But gradually Argentines are turning northward to the United States. Until politics and the dollar shortage barred most of our magazines, the number of French fashion magazines found in the Argentine capital was small compared

to the number of North American publications. Today the Hollywood films which display our manners and morals, our homes and sports are making our influence stronger than that of the French. The Argentine youths of university age are no longer longing only for France—they are going to the United States. The older generation does not like it and sighs for the good old days. But the good old days are obviously at an end.

Chapter VIII

This Is the Land

ARGENTINA'S SOIL, as every citizen will tell you, is startlingly rich and miraculously fertile. He quotes experts who say its black, alluvial deposit, "the cream of soils," varies in depth from seven to eleven feet—a seemingly almost inexhaustible agricultural treasure. Nature here, the Argentine adds, is heavy, lazy, and prolific, providing—with rare exceptions like the 1951 drought—an almost ideal combination of warm sunshine and abundant rainfall.

All this, you quickly realize, is Argentina's *pampa*, the plain which is the country's heartland. It is so vast and so productive of grain and beef that, as its output has varied, so has risen and fallen the price of bread and meat in many of the world's markets. Though the number of Argentines who actually live on the *pampa* is relatively

small, a drought, a frost, a plague of locusts, or a cattle disease will affect millions of others.

Argentina's *pampa* actually covers only a fifth of the country's total area, but its wide grazing lands and cultivated fields produce 90 per cent of Argentina's grain and 60 per cent of its livestock, not including sheep. The *pampa* is really a huge agricultural factory, turning out countless tons of meat and cereal for an insatiably hungry world.

Land and climate have a great effect on the people of every country. In few places, however, have they helped mold the national character more than in Argentina, where they have contributed to its agricultural riches, its cities, and the temperament of its people.

Most North Americans do not realize that Argentina is essentially a temperate-zone country, as are only two other Latin republics, Chile and Uruguay. The rest are wholly or largely within the tropics. Much of Brazil, for example, has a climate that saps the energy of its people, takes away their desire for work, and stands as a barrier to European immigration.

In Argentina you can find almost every type of land and climate, from tropic jungle to frozen waste. Within its four major physical divisions are many areas similar to our own.

The *pampas*, for instance, might be compared to our Middle West and Great Plains. They produce wheat, corn, oats, flax, hogs, and beef cattle. Around the cities of Buenos Aires, Rosario, and La Plata are thriving truck and dairy farms.

Northwestern Argentina is similar to our states of Arizona, New Mexico, and western Texas. Here are most

of Argentina's mineral resources: gold, silver, copper, tin. The irrigated areas produce wheat, corn, sugar cane and, as has already been mentioned, grapes and wine. After a drought, this is Argentina's dustbowl: if you ride the train to Mendoza or Zapala you don't need to be told—dust gets in your eyes, on your clothes, in your mouth. Outside the window you can see the wind blow it. The cloud raised by a passing car over an unpaved road is dense and black.

In the northeast is the Argentine Mesopotamia, the gently rolling grassland between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, where cattle and sheep graze. The Paraná basin is potentially great cotton country, similar to our South. Bordering Paraguay is the subtropical Chaco, where the quebracho tree grows. It is valuable for its wood and for its bark, which contains a high percentage of tannin, used in the tanning of leather.

The third division of Argentina is Patagonia, which roughly covers everything south of Bahía Blanca. It extends to the beautiful lake country, but is best known as the arid, windswept plateau land which reaches to the Straits of Magellan. Most of it is devoted to sheep-raising—the only cropland (chiefly alfalfa) is found along the rivers. The boisterous, roaring wind of Patagonia is legendary. Against it a man—or a plane—makes headway only by strenuous exertion.

The final division is the Andes, which reach from the dry north to heavily glaciated, ice-covered southern Patagonia. In the north they are higher than our Rockies, more austere, more barren. In the lake country they are lower, greener, and more friendly.

Her land and climate have meant that Argentina has,

and always has had, a predominantly agricultural society which revolves around the output of the *pampa*. The other areas complement the *pampa's* production.

Argentina rose to its important position among the world's nations by exporting its agricultural products. Most Argentines, as Carl Taylor explains, know that Mendoza means wine; Tucumán, sugar; Misiones, *yerba*; the Chaco, quebracho; Rio Negro, fruit; Patagonia, sheep; and the *pampa*, Argentina's famed cattle.

They also know that their country's raw agricultural products have, in the past, constituted more than a third of Argentina's annual wealth. And they know that farm products furnished almost four-fifths of the raw products for Argentina's industry.

These ideas, as Mr. Taylor explains, are not merely learned in school. They are part of the country's proud tradition.

"It is highly doubtful," he adds, "that the whole population, old and young, foreign born and native born, know as much in a broad way about anything else that concerns the whole of Argentine society as they do about its agricultural products. And it is also a safe wager to say that if a stranger were to ask the first hundred Argentines he met in any part of the nation or the world to justify their universal pride in their country, a marked majority would recite the facts just cited. They would not demonstrate their membership in Argentine society by telling you what they think of *Yanquis* or Englishmen, or by discussing Parisian styles. They would recite the chief prides of Argentina, her agriculture and agricultural products."

What is the *pampa* on which Argentina has built her

wealth and position? And what is this land where wealthy *estancieros* and their employees live?

It is the grassy, treeless area, virtually without stone or gravel, which extends in a semicircle with an average radius of 350 miles around the city of Buenos Aires. The *pampa* includes the rich provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fé, the southern part of Córdoba and San Luis, and part of the new province of Eva Perón, formerly La Pampa territory.

Nowhere else in Latin America do naturally fertile soils cover such large areas. Away from the *pampa*, in Santiago del Estero, are poor soils and scrub lands. In Mendoza's foothills, as we have noted, irrigation has been necessary to produce rich areas of specialized fruits and vegetables.

But the *pampa* needs little help. Sweeping almost without variation from the west bank of the Plata and the mild Atlantic on out to the Andean foothills in the west, it is the area which has produced the greatest wealth with the least effort.

Looking at the *pampa* from a plane, it seems endless, stretching on and on like a huge patchwork rug. There are no hills or wooded slopes, but flat, absolutely flat, land like a tabletop. From a train—the most important transport of the *pampa*—the horizon appears a half-circle. The rails behind you are parallel straight lines stretching out endlessly. Everything is close at hand or on the horizon. There is no middle ground. Only the tops of distant windmills are visible, and the *pampa* seems to curve only as the earth curves.

The rich prairie grass seems to go on forever—green clover or succulent lucerne, monster sunflowers grown

for oil, and lazy, gentle cattle bred, as Christopher Isherwood says, "into walking packets of meat."

Pasture goes beyond the eye's visioning. In some ways it is like our own prairie land, but the *pampa's* grass crops are more lush and lighter. Rainfall is greater; temperature extremes less.

Although there are few geographic barriers to transportation and few topographic contours to condition patterns of settlement, the *pampa* is not a well-traversed land. It has comparatively few of the concrete or asphalt highways we know. Most public roads are unmacadamized, and often barely passable in certain seasons. In the last ten years road-building has moved ahead rapidly. Today concrete roads join the capital and the provinces of Santa Fé, Córdoba, and many key points in the province of Buenos Aires.

Many thousands of miles of dirt road have been improved. The general absence of stone over the *pampa* has made hard-road construction expensive but, on the other hand road-builders do not have to worry about expensive bridges or tunnels. Hundreds of miles of private byways follow the wire fences and divide the land into innumerable rectangles, orderly pastures, and farmlands. All roads lead eventually to the railroad stations—the points from which cattle are shipped to market.

Every Argentine knows the fascination of the *pampa*, whether he has seen it or not. He has read about it from childhood, heard its music, probably hummed the nostalgic popular song, "*Adios, Pampa Mia.*" He knows the thick *ombu* tree of the *pampas*—it is the theme of countless poems and songs. Even in the capital, he knows the impressive *ombu* in the parks and plazas. No one knows

the origin of the tree, which botanists consider a gigantic shrub or bush, but it has become Argentina's national tree. Its gnarled roots reach out over the ground and give it a sturdy appearance. At night the *ombu's* leaves are noxious. One rarely sees a nest in its branches, but its generous spread of branch and almost evergreen foliage afford magnificent shade to men and animals on the *pampa*.

Around his residence the *estancia*-owner has planted great squares of huge, shaggy eucalyptus trees and tall, stately Lombardy poplars. If he is a man of wealth, his park also contains his polo fields, tennis courts, and swimming pools.

In his description of the *pampa*, Archibald MacLeish, former Librarian of Congress, explains how the railway stations "come every twenty minutes as though laid out, not by geography, but by clocks." "Argentina of the *pampas*," he writes, "Argentina of the enormous plains, Argentina flowing out into the morning beyond the hills like a sea beyond capes. . . Argentina without towns, with few roads, with fences straight and wide apart as meridians on a map. . . It is a country in which the distances from house to house are too great for the barking of dogs even on the stillest night, a country in which the cocks crow only twice because there is no answer. It is a country so level that even time has no hold upon it and one century is like another; a country so empty that the watchers at night put their eyes along the ground to see the circle of the horizon; a country in which the sky is so huge that men plant islands of eucalyptus over their houses to be covered from the blue; a country in which space is so great that all the visions end in eternity. It is

a country of grass, a country without stone. . . A country in which green goes on and on like water and the gulls follow the plows as seagulls follow ships, a country in which the women are always together under the dark trees in the evening, their faces fading into loneliness with the night."

Waldo Frank, describing the *pampa*, says: "It is a land so vast in its monotony, so undifferentiated in its forms, that it ceases to be, like other land, material you can work with; it becomes a mood, at last a spirit, which invades you."

Two centuries after Buenos Aires' founding, the *pampa* still belonged to bands of savages. Early Argentine settlers held only a thin strip of land close to the sea and the river, where they pastured their cattle at great peril. The Indians were exterminated only after long and relentless campaigns in which no quarter was asked and none given.

Before Argentina's railroads were built, the *pampa* was a disorderly, barbarous region, in some ways like our own wild West. Its gauchos were the equivalent of our cowboys. The *pampa* did not approach true economic status until its lands were finally fenced with wire. After that the owner of the land was on his way to becoming the personage around whom everything in Argentina was to revolve.

Chapter IX

The Owners of the Land

APPROXIMATELY TWO HUNDRED families have long owned the great bulk of Argentina's richest land. They have developed the strains of the world's finest cattle and grown the wheat, corn, and linseed which has brought them fabulous financial rewards. For years they dominated the nation's economy, society, and politics.

Some of the first *estancieros* were scarcely more than cattle rustlers. Others were poor Irish immigrants, or small-time *políticos*. Acres and acres of land were parcelled out as rewards to soldiers. A *caudillo* paid his supporters by the acre as he might write a check; the dictator Rosas gave away animals as liberally as he did land.

Whoever they were, the *estancieros* knew that land meant wealth and increased their holdings as much as possible. The early sheep- and cattle-breeders took little

interest in improving their stock or in running their *estancias* as businesses. They let their herds run at will on the vast, unfenced range, and slaughtered them for hides, tallow, and salt beef.

The fence, the railroad and, in 1877, the first refrigerator ship, changed all that. The British would not eat lean, tough Argentine beef, so the *estancieros* began breeding imported beef cattle on fenced-in pastures. To feed them properly they had to plow some of their land and grow alfalfa. This required farm hands, so the *estancieros* called for more immigrants.

The great *estancias* developed according to a feudal pattern. Those workers born on the land lived and died on it. Whatever schooling they received was given them by the *estanciero*. Their food, save for a few items, came from the land. Their only contact with the outside world was an occasional visit to the nearest town.

In the early nineteenth century the large landowners became the aristocracy of Argentina, the traditional ruling class. The top landowning families intermarried to an astonishing degree, as can be seen in the names of the leading *señoras* of today who retain their family names. They form a closely knit caste. Rarely does an outsider break into their social set.

The story of the Menendez family illustrates how some landowning families have become millionaires. José Menendez, a Spanish immigrant, migrated from Havana in 1875. In Buenos Aires he married a pretty, black-haired girl of the middle class, borrowed a few thousand pesos from an uncle, bought several hundred sheep, and began traveling south. It took four years to walk to the Straits of Magellan, and on the way three children were

born and the small flock of sheep increased to a few thousand. Don José and Doña Maria had six children, two of whom died. The net income of each child—and of the estates of each of the two deceased children—is said to average about a million dollars a year, after taxes.

This fortune was built up in one of the most sparsely settled portions of the world, where a constant wind rarely blows less than forty miles an hour and where virtually the only inhabitants are Ona Indians and shepherds. The herds of sheep now run up into the millions, and the barns are equipped with all the latest electrical devices for shearing. Five thousand sheep is the average number sheared each day.

Originally an *estancia* meant only livestock: a grain farm is a *chacra*. The owners of the large sugar plantations in Tucumán and the vast vineyards in Mendoza and San Juan consider themselves *estancieros*, though they are not of the cattle aristocracy.

Properties of less than 25,000 acres are still the exception in Argentina. One count not so many years ago showed 259 individual Argentines holding land and properties averaging 47,000 acres each. Fifty families in Buenos Aires Province—where land is most expensive—held more than 75,000 acres each. The largest holdings, of up to more than half a million acres, are chiefly in the territories.

The Perón government has tried to break up these enormous holdings, but has not had much success. The big landowners do not want to sell, and most of them have held on to their property. When it is sold, the buyers in many cases are men who have made their fortunes in industrial or import-export activities and want a place

to invest their money, since it is so difficult to transfer profits abroad. Thus the land has not been divided among the actual farmers; it has simply been transferred from one absentee owner to another.

Estancieros seldom want to sell less than five hundred acres. Occasionally a group of tenants join together to purchase a tract and subdivide it, but for the most part the farmer has little opportunity to buy his own place. Even if he does, he cannot afford the expensive machinery, the price of which is increased by import taxes. He cannot sell his produce cooperatively because the big *estancieros* who surround him force him to accept their price. Yet the promise of dividing the land produces hope in Argentine hearts and helps to win elections.

On the statute books are homestead acts designed to break up the huge estates which date back to Spanish land grants. But most of the laws are ineffective. On various occasions the government has promised to cancel the taxes of any *estanciero* who sets up his own colonization project, but few have done it, for, as one authority expresses it, there is probably no society in the world whose members prize the ownership of pasture and farm land as do the Argentines. But the idea that a wider distribution of land ownership would help develop a better and more democratic social order is held by many Argentines, including the city dwellers who do not know much about agricultural economics.

The crippling inflation which has spiraled since 1950 demonstrates this most clearly. Formerly, when funds could be freely remitted, many *estancia* owners and their large families lived abroad, mostly in Paris, for at least part of the year. It was their lavish spending that first

made the Argentines known throughout Europe. Today many live with one foot on the soil and the other in Buenos Aires—unhappy at home yet afraid to leave. With interests in Argentina's cattle and crops, as well as in the nation's culture, they have long dominated both Argentina's rural and urban life.

Those who dislike them call them the oligarchy, and the impressive Jockey Club on Calle Florida in Buenos Aires was their citadel. The less vehement admit that the *estancia* system, with all its faults, did build up Argentina's great cattle industry.

You will get many varying stories about how much and how great is the *estanciero* control of Argentina's economy. Under today's highly partisan conditions, it would be hard to justify most of the statistics from either side. For one thing, the *estanciero* is generally a bitter enemy of the Perón regime. He hears talk about breaking up his estates, an idea which he considers Communist no matter what Perón calls it. He knows his taxes are rising, although they are not nearly as high as in the United States. He is also aware that taxes plus the increased cost of working his land may eventually force him to sell some of his property in order to continue to live at his accustomed standard.

The *estanciero* insists Perón will someday destroy Argentina's cattle industry which, he points out, depends on large land areas where cattle can be moved from place to place, fed on grass, fattened on alfalfa in summer and on cereal grains in winter. "The small farmers," he tells you, "often raise just enough for themselves, and little for domestic sale or export. And without exports, Argentina dies."

He sounds just like an American businessman when he explains how the cost of everything he needs to run his *estancia* has gone up. Wire, windmills, pipes, wood for posts—all have risen ten, fifteen, twenty times in the last few years. “We now have to waste half our time simply arguing with officials to settle endless disputes,” he continues. “We suspect that lots of our workers deliberately try to get fired in the hope of getting severance pay so that they can go to the city and get factory jobs. Nobody in the government understands—or wants to understand—our problems. On the other hand, we are constantly singled out as the group that is ruining Argentina.”

It is especially noteworthy, however, that more and more of the *estancia* owners were saying, as early as 1950: “We, ourselves, are partly to blame. We are responsible for not having taken the lead ourselves and for letting Perón with his demagogue promises win over many who would have been on our side.”

With all this, it is surprising to find that the Sociedad Rural Argentina, the *estancia* owners’ major organization which pioneered in improving the breed of Argentine herds and which runs the famous cattle shows, has done comparatively little about current conditions, except to have some of its leaders make a few mild speeches. Some Argentines think this policy has been weak-kneed. Others feel it is in the Argentine tradition—that the *estancieros* have been cautious because they felt they could not accomplish anything.

Many an *estanciero* sees himself as a generous, benevolent father to his workers, one who shares their joys and sorrows and is interested only in their welfare. He cannot understand why his more intelligent workers are leaving

the *estancia* for jobs in city factories. And he does not much care for the minimum wage rate the government has set for rural workers.

Because of increased costs and labor shortages, many *estancieros* are turning to operations which require less labor. Instead of running *criadeganados*, breeding and rearing ranches, they become *invernadas*, fattening and feeding specially purchased young cattle.

Others are renting more of their land to tenants, or raising cereal crops themselves. But breaking the rich sod of their grazing lands seems almost sinful to many a proud *estancia* owner.

The reorganization of *estancias* as family-owned business corporations is becoming increasingly common. Children of an *estanciero* often form a stock company, dividing the shares among themselves to avoid both inheritance and income taxes. An elder son may assume the responsibility for running the place as a business, rather than leaving it to a *mayordomo* and his foremen.

One illustration of this tendency is the *Estancia X*, four hours outside of Buenos Aires and one of the largest land holdings near the capital. Once rated as one of the world's largest sheep farms, its owners were host and hostess to world-famed personalities. He calls his *estancia* a small place—only 25,000 acres. For many years he played polo, and both he and his lovely wife had as many friends in London and New York as in Buenos Aires.

Today, because he is older and busier, the owner spends fewer hours on his polo ponies and more and more on managing the *estancia*. He can, and frequently has, shod his own horses. He operates on his animals with

the skill of a veterinary. A practical carpenter, he can also fix his electric light plant. He keeps increasing his herds of Romney Marsh and Hampshire Down sheep, cattle, and hogs. He imports bulls from Scotland and England to vary the blood strain and produce better cattle.

"I want to keep this business a paying one," he explains. He obviously believes that he and those like him are being discriminated against and that a combination of taxes and price restrictions are making things increasingly difficult. However, selling his land to be broken up into small portions is the last thing he would want to do.

Whether he and his friends will be able to maintain their position no one knows. Their days may be numbered. Whether or not this is best for Argentina is hardly the question—the country, and the world, have changed. But with the changes in Argentina have come a decrease in beef production and the rationing of meat into virtually none for export. Maybe before too long the government will realize that it is not practical to ruin the lowest cost agricultural production in the world in an effort to create an industrial economy which at best could only be third rate.

Chapter X

The Workers of the Land

JUST BEFORE President Perón's first election, groups of campaign workers wearing large peronista badges visited scores of *estancias* in the Province of Buenos Aires. They showed their area maps and big black record books to the tenant farmers and *peons*. "What acreage do you want after the election?" they asked.

The requests were carefully noted. No specific promises were given. Yet the inference was clear: once Perón was in the Casa Rosada, the land they had indicated would be theirs.

Perón knew the *peons* and tenant farmers hungered for land. So his promise "Give the land to the one who cultivates it" won him many a vote. No politician had ever before favored agrarian reform.

Argentina's tenant farmers, or *colonos*, rate far below

the *estancia* owners on the economic and social scale. Yet they produce from two-thirds to three-fourths of the wheat, corn, and flax which are the country's most important crops. These farmers and their families are the real middle class of Argentine agriculture. Unlike the *estancieros*, there are hundreds of thousands of them, and their number is increasing. They are seldom mentioned by anyone writing about life and conditions in the Argentine, partly because they are not a homogeneous group.

You will see the *colono* in the vineyard, sugar, cotton, and fruit districts as well as the cereal belt. Sun-tanned, leather-skinned, quiet in manner, the average tenant farmer is ignorant but shrewd. He works hard all week and spends his Sunday afternoon in a nearby *boliche* (the bar adjacent to a country store), talking, bowling, and drinking his highproof *cana*—a sweet, fiery rum.

Many *colonos* in the livestock-producing districts possess more capital and produce far more than the very small landowners who raise cattle. If, in addition, they have managed to acquire even a little bit more than the average three hundred acres, their neighbors recognize their superiority. For the most part, however, they tend toward the lower levels of the middle class. The range runs all the way from the *colono* who is just a little better than a *peon*, or common worker, to one who is just a little lower than an owner-operator. Their per capita income is about a quarter to a third that of a United States farmer. Still, this amount is greater than most Latin-American agricultural producers.

The average Argentine tenant farmer used to be so deeply concerned with his day-to-day tasks and family

affairs and so unconscious of his importance in the national economy that he was unconcerned about politics.

"Now that the government in Buenos Aires is involved in almost every phase of our lives," he tells you, "that is no longer true." Once he did not care to vote, or obediently follow the political dictates of his landlord, but now he is aware of his citizenship and his ballot. In the past he rarely joined groups to make his opinion felt, but now he has been practically forced to do something. Perón's party representatives are everywhere. The prices of products are set by the government. Whether the tenant farmer can get implements and housing may depend more on what the government does than what he himself is able to do.

Hence the keen interest in what is happening in Buenos Aires. News from the capital is followed with tremendous interest since the doings of the government have become a part of everyday life.

The *chacero* is in almost the same position as the *colono*. He is a tenant farmer who uses his land for diversified crops. At present few *chaceros* make enough money cropping to buy much land. Some, however, are beginning to emerge to ownership status.

Though his housing is likely to be as comfortless as the *colono's*—dirt floors, side walls of hardened mud or adobe brick, and roofs with few supports—the *chacero's* slight independence comes from the fact that he uses his land for some subsistence farming. When prices are good and farming is done on a real share basis, he can actually get a few thousand *pesos* ahead. On the other hand, if he rents for cash, his landlord often raises rents with price

increases. Thus often he does not make any money when prices rise—and when prices drop he is penniless.

Most authorities agree there is no segment of Argentina's population more important to the nation's life and yet less conscious of his importance than the Argentine farmer. The explanation lies chiefly in the history of the country's economic and social development, and the institutionalization of the class structure.

The fathers and grandfathers of most *colonos* came to Argentina as poor immigrants after most of the land was distributed. They never have owned land. Most of them started farming as hired men, and rose to the status of tenants. The *colonos* of today are occupying the highest tenure status their group has ever enjoyed. Nevertheless, most of them feel they never will be farm owners unless they are assisted in Buenos Aires. Naturally they are interested in Perón's plans. As many put it: "Only if he or somebody there helps us will we ever achieve independence."

This faith in Perón is, however, beginning to disappear, for many have found that instead of having the local *acopiador* as middleman, the government has taken the middle man's role for itself—and frequently left them with even less than they had before.

In the past, the Argentine landowner collected from a fourth to half of what his *colonos* produced. Sometimes a roving sharecropper would contract to till a piece of land for a period of two to five years. Since the *colono* was not paid for any improvements he made for his landlord, he generally was not interested in improving the property. Often he plowed in April, let the land lie un-

touched until June, then put in his wheat and waited for it to ripen.

Since he saw and handled money only when his annual crop was sold, he usually had to go to the *acopiador* for funds to carry him over. The *acopiador* usually owned a general store where the *colono* purchased his potatoes and supplies at any price the *acopiador* set. He also sold the jute bags in which the crop had to be delivered. And the *acopiador* owned the threshing machine, which he rented at so much a bushel. Only the *acopiador* would extend credit.

Thus the *colono* was often heavily in debt by the time his grain was threshed. The *acopiador* could corner the crops in his districts before they were sold to the big exporting firms, knowing that most *colonos* had to sell at the time prices were at their lowest.

Many *colonos* considered themselves lucky if they were able to pay off their debts and begin the new year in the clear. Naturally, therefore, they were easy prey to Perón's promises of a better life in return for votes.

The *peon* working on the Argentine *estancia* had even fewer opportunities, but since he expected little he was not disappointed. If you saw him on an *estancia* at the time of a celebration, dressed in the costume of a bygone day, you would have found it hard to identify the *peon* as Argentina's truly forgotten man.

But the fact is that he was for a long time the man to whom few, if any, Argentines paid much attention. City workers were organized and began getting improvements long before the militarists came into power. But the Argentine *peon*, the man of all work on the *estancia* or the

tenant farm, in the vineyards of Mendoza, the sugar fields of Tucumán, the quebracho forests or cotton plantations in the Chaco and the *maté* fields in Misiones was taken for granted. He, in turn, often took his own position for granted.

Perón, however, has improved the position of the rural worker. His Statute of the Peon and other acts provide minimum wages, a day off each week, medical and pharmaceutical assistance, etc. The government has set up many rural workers' organizations, especially for agricultural rather than pastoral laborers.

Frequently the *peons* have been hired hands so long they seemingly do not care to get ahead. But sometimes, with the help of a sympathetic employer or a colonization project, a *peon* will become a tenant farmer or even a small landowner.

More and more farm laborers are shifting to city jobs. Their ranks are more than filled, especially in the north and west, by waves of men of even lower status who flow in from Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile. They go into the sugar, cotton, *yerba maté*, and lumber industries in the north. Other migrants, as in our own country, take unskilled, low-paying jobs as cotton, sugar beet, or fruit pickers. They face the same abuses our migrants encounter—inadequate housing, company stores which charge exorbitant prices, and relatively little food to eat despite the richness of the land on which they work.

Yet whether he works as a hired man all year round or on an itinerant basis, the Argentine worker is not and never was a serf, nor is he quite as badly off as some Indians and *mestizos* in many other Latin American countries.

The Gaucho Tradition

LOOK CAREFULLY in almost any Argentine home, and somewhere you will find a calendar painting of a full-faced, deeply tanned man in a pair of big, baggy trousers. He will have spurs at his heels, a massive silver coin-decked belt round his waist, and a guitar slung over his saddle.

He is riding the endless, flat expanse of the *pampa*, under a blue, starlit sky. He is so ugly that his ugliness produces affection. His horse looks like the father of all horses.

The painting will be by Florencio Molina Campos. With eleven others in similar vein, it illustrates the calendar long issued annually by Alpargatas, a Scotch-Argentine firm which makes the famous rope-soled sandals

worn by laboring men and women throughout the country.

In poorer Argentine homes, the Molina Campos calendar occupies a place of honor. In others, it hangs in the kitchen, the pantry, or the den. Molina Campos has romanticized and glorified the gaucho. His work expresses the spirit and tradition which Argentines like to remember.

The heroic legend of the gauchos who lived a nomadic and adventurous life on the *pampa* before it was fenced in and fought with the liberating armies in the wars against Spain remains one of the strongest influences on Argentine character today.

The gaucho lives not only in the Molina Campos paintings and in the reproduction of his work. He appears in movies, songs, and stories. You will see him in the costumes children like to wear, just as our children wear the Hopalong Cassidy costume. You even see the gaucho on candy bar wrappers. He signifies a nostalgic yearning for the past—a romanticized past which realistic historians say never existed.

Nothing quite upsets an Argentine as much as having an enthusiastic young woman from North America ask him to show her a gaucho. "They have disappeared," he will explain. "As dead as the dodo."

Yet many an Argentine rural worker keeps the idea alive by wearing the traditional gaucho spurs and belts. The cossack-type of trousers tucked into knee-high, leather boots have changed very little since gaucho days. The gaucho's short bolero jacket, the kerchief knotted round the throat, and the poncho of sheep or vicuna wool are in everyday use. Even *estancieros* like to borrow the

gaucho's dashing costume, especially at fiesta time. In the smaller cities you find many an Argentine wearing the long scarf outside rather than inside his topcoat, and the narrow-brimmed, high-crowned hat that resembles those seen in the drawings and pictures of bygone days.

The gaucho emerges in the Argentine's mind's eye as a lean, brown-bodied figure, constantly riding the *pampa* as free and easy as the wind. The muscular and vigorous gaucho's only serious aims in life, so the Argentine is convinced, were to ride superbly, to mount and dismount a galloping horse, to throw and tame a wild colt single-handed. The Argentines' delight in mastering animals doubtless stems from this. The gaucho tradition of horsemanship is still vigorous; and horses are still very much a part of even the city man's life. Most Argentines ride well, and they love doing it in a dashing, whirling, daring style to show off their skill at its best.

The gaucho combined the Spaniard's dignity with the Indian's savage skill. He lived not as a herdsman or breeder, but by taming the wild horses and then riding them in pursuit of wilder cattle. Two things sealed his fate: the invention of barbed wire to fence in the *estancias* and prevent animals from roaming away, and the British preference for tasty beef from well-bred cattle.

The gaucho's sense of personal liberty still marks many an Argentine. In his day laws were unwritten and often crude. Dictator Rosas and the lesser *caudillos* established their rule in their own territories as they saw fit. None of them were more effective than their strength to enforce their will. The man who could hold the respect of the gauchos in his locality and command them in war was the chieftain. For over two hundred years such men ruled

most of Argentina's interior. Often they inspired both devotion and terror.

When Argentina achieved independence from Spanish rule, the city of Buenos Aires assumed the right to represent all those living in the former viceroyalty. The gauchos and *caudillos* unanimously opposed this threat to their power. To this day, the conflict between the capital and the interior remains.

The gaucho, says Argentine legend, was a poker-faced, seemingly emotionless individual, something of a mystic and fatalistic brooder. Argentines still show little outward emotion. Yet it took only a word or a signal to change the soft-spoken rider into a hard-fighting warrior. He had courage, but no moral or intellectual qualities. From the gaucho model, Argentines have developed the nonconformist individualism which can be detected in the modern Argentine. It manifests itself, for example, in his refusal to obey traffic lights. The municipality of Buenos Aires was forced to discontinue the use of the few it had installed some years ago and has never attempted to try any since. The gaucho's suspiciousness and wild independence may be responsible for the Argentine's failure to establish many truly cooperative ventures in the nation. Internationally, these characteristics show up at hemisphere and world conferences and in Argentina's procrastination in ratifying treaties.

Work was beneath the gaucho's dignity as a man. He left it to his woman whom he called a *china* (pronounced chee-na), a Quechua Indian word which simply means *hembra*, or female, in the sense in which the word is applied to animals. *China* has since acquired a somewhat more affectionate connotation, and is still applied to girls

of the lower classes in the provinces. Because the gaucho refused to tie himself to one woman, many an Argentine man—perhaps even more than most Latins—still feels all women outside his family circle are his potential prerogative.

The Argentine's mustache also comes partly from the gauchos. Most gauchos had large, flowing mustaches, and sometimes beards. Per capita, more Argentine men are said to wear such adornment than perhaps those of any other country in the world.

John White calls the gauchos a completely new and original race, which developed during the colonial period. "The gaucho was the most picturesque and romantic type of man produced on earth in modern times. Unfortunately, he was destined to pass into oblivion. But before he disappeared, he played a tremendously important part in Argentine history. It is no exaggeration, in fact, to say that it was the gaucho who made Argentina. First he helped the Spaniards win the country from the Indians by providing an effective barrier between the civilized towns and the raiding savages. Later, he formed the mounted militias which won freedom from Spain, not only for Argentina but for Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia and Peru. Then after many years of civil war, he finally forced the city and the Province of Buenos Aires to join the federation. It was then, and not until then, that Argentina became a nation."

Domingo Sarmiento, who is known as Argentina's schoolmaster President, felt the gauchos must be exterminated. In his remarkable study of the gaucho mentality, *Facundo, or Civilization and Barbarism* (published in 1845), Sarmiento denounced the gaucho tradition as

dangerous, uncivilized and primitive. To him it represented the worst and most savage elements in Argentine character. Sarmiento distrusted the gauchos' illiteracy, rough sports, *cana*, and gambling.

Now that Perón is reviving the gaucho idea once more, Sarmiento's name rarely appears as one of the national heroes of whom Argentines hear day after day. Perón, seeking to develop his own *caudillo* status against a modern setting, has not only followed the dictator Rosas' "bloody precedent," as Fleur Cowles points out in her comparison of the two regimes, but has also adopted many traditions stemming directly from gaucho days and has glorified Rosas.

Argentines of all classes drink *maté*, the herb tea which has come down from gaucho days. *Maté*, incidentally, can be described as Argentina's national drink although it is also popular in Uruguay and in Southern Brazil. It is made from *yerba maté* leaves placed in a gourd, atop which boiling water is poured. One drinks it by sipping through a metal straw. Argentines claim *maté* has all the vitamins supplied by a full vegetable diet, particularly Vitamin C. It contains less caffeine than coffee or tea, and in contrast to the other beverages which are acid, is alkaline in reaction. This is important in view of the heavy meat consumption of Argentines. Some authorities even claim *yerba maté* is responsible for the low incidence of cancer of the alimentary tract.

Argentina's epic poem, *Martin Fierro*, tells how the gauchos used the *maté* gourd in much the same way as our Indians smoked their peace pipes, passing it from one member of the group to another around a fire at mid-day or sundown. Every Argentine can quote at least a

few passages from *Martin Fierro*. The ballad is still so popular that country merchants often stock copies of it along with their staples of salt, flour, and sugar.

The author, José Hernandez, was born in Buenos Aires Province in 1834. He followed Rosas to the bitter end, and fought the civilizing influences of Sarmiento. When the last gaucho *caudillo* in Entre Rios was beaten, Hernandez wrote his long poem on the life and sufferings of the gaucho. It was published in 1872. Like *Gone with the Wind*, it glorified an epoch which had ended.

Martin Fierro tells the story of his own life with the wit and vaunt that characterizes his people. Taken prisoner by the army one night when he was drunk in a *pulperia* where a murder had been committed, Martin is pressed into frontier service against the Indians. He escapes, turns bad, and is persecuted by the police, who do not understand his love for freedom, his desire to live "as free as a bird in the sky." He does not consider himself bad: he never fights or kills until he has to. Finally, he takes refuge among the Indians.

In *The Return of Martin Fierro*, he leaves the Indians and comes back to the society he fled. Some Argentines feel Hernandez had a change of heart, that he realized Argentina was coming of age and brought his gaucho back to an orderly world.

Whatever its poetic merits, the book was, and is, a tremendous success, and it is considered a true picture of the life and language, the thought and rather simple wisdom of the nineteenth-century Argentine gaucho. Thousands read it today, appreciating its proud, lonely philosophy, its roughness, its countless allusions to the old ways of the land. "The breath of the *pampas* runs through

its disheveled, untamed, vigorous verses," one critic said of it.

In 1926 Ricardo Güiraldes wrote the classic novel of the *pampas*, *Don Segundo Sombra*. Many other Argentines have written of the gaucho, and are writing of him today. The interpretations change constantly, much as our own history changes as we re-evaluate our heroes and traditions. But the gaucho spirit and inheritance continue to affect Argentina.

The Argentine Worker

A VISITING United States industrial engineer, anxious to see a new, widely-publicized Argentine industry in operation, journeyed out to its plant one day not long ago only to find the place closed because of a fiesta. Next day he was busy with other matters, but the morning after he made the journey once more. Again the plant was closed—another holiday.

The following week he telephoned the manager and inquired: "How do you get any work done? Every other day seems to be a holiday."

A moment later he regretted putting the question—but not because it was embarrassing. For the next ten minutes, in a torrent of words, the manager described the difficulties with which he had to deal and bewailed the fact that another two-day holiday was just beginning.

The number of paid holidays, all sanctioned by the Perón government as one way of winning the favor and support of the growing number of workers, is beyond the comprehension of most North Americans, and, it must be admitted, of many Argentines as well.

The official holidays became so numerous, in fact, that in 1951 the Argentine Chamber of Commerce reported that for every two days an Argentine worked, he was officially entitled to one day of rest. Some holidays were subsequently cancelled. But the vacation schedule is still more liberal than that of the greatest of the "feather-bedded" industries in the United States.

The law formerly declared eighteen legal holidays compared with eight in the United States. Then the General Confederation of Labor (C. G. T.), the over-all labor organization which is to all intents and purposes a government agency, added nine more in 1951 by decree or by work stoppages. These were all observed by the Federation's claimed six million members and by most other workers as well.

Big rallies bring everything to a dead halt and virtually paralyze industry for the work-week. Celebrants journey to and from Buenos Aires at government expense in order to participate. It is customary after a big peronista day such as October 17 to declare the next day a holiday also. And in addition to all these, each branch of Argentine industry also has special days on which none of its craftsmen will work. There is a day for the barbers, another one for the waiters, a third for the metal workers.

The net effect of these holidays is a tremendous loss of manpower which businessmen say might better be used

turning out production needed if the industrial drive is to succeed. Besides official holidays, there has been a sharp increase in absenteeism in the last few years, sharply affecting production. Most workers have taken the not unnatural attitude that if others do not work, why should they.

To meet this difficulty a new system of attendance bonus clauses was put into contracts between the unions and various industries. Pay raises of as high as 30 per cent were awarded those who worked every day. Absence of as few as three days for any cause except a death in the immediate family during a payroll period of two weeks to a month cost the worker his entire increase. An absence of just one day reduced his increase as much as 50 per cent. Lateness was also reflected in the pay envelope. The clause had an effect immediately. In many industries where absenteeism was formerly as high as 12 to 15 per cent, the percentage dropped to almost zero. In 1951 it was 8.4 per cent.

The question of the productivity of Argentine workers is one of the major factors industrial observers use in measuring how far they believe the country can grow industrially. On several occasions Perón himself has stated that one great fault of the Argentine is that he is lazy. The *New York Times* reported he told that to a visiting United States Congressional delegation not long after his second election in November, 1951. And while Perón didn't mention them, statistics based on the United Nations Bulletin of Statistics for August, 1951, showed just what this meant. Based on 1937 as 100, the 1939 productivity of Argentine workers was listed as 99, that of Canadians at 101, and that of the United States the same.

Sweden was higher with 105. But by 1949 the Argentine figure was down to 88, Canada was up to 103, the United States at 121, Sweden at 124. In 1951 the Argentine worker had gone up a bit to 91, Canada was 110, Chile 116, Sweden 128, and the United States 130.

Four factors contribute to an Argentine worker's productivity: his actual skill, his willingness and ability to cooperate, his labor unions (which in the past were a part of his job but now dominate and control its every aspect), and finally how well the worker is prospering under today's conditions.

Engineers say that, although some Argentine plants are highly efficient and use all the devices of modern industry, in general their over-all efficiency rates lower than ours. Argentine industry uses more manpower per job because manpower used to cost less. Production requiring hand operations could sometimes be turned out at lower rates than in the United States. But Argentines have not created the mass hand production methods of either the Germans or the Japanese. While well-adapted to modern factory methods, Argentines have not been large-scale producers for international markets, and they will probably not be in the foreseeable future.

During the early stages of most new manufacturing industries, managers and chief technicians are usually brought in from abroad. If their announced purpose is to train local personnel and then step out, they have generally been welcome. But if they have intended to stay, especially in recent years, there has often been strong resentment. Some concerns, especially United States firms, have successfully overcome this by sending their most promising Argentines to plants in North America for

observation and experience. Most of them come back enthusiastic.

Argentine workers have few, if any, of the native handicraft traditions which many North Americans associate with many Latin countries. There is little native pottery, weaving, or carving, although some is produced in remote parts of Córdoba and in the Andean regions. Paraguayan lace, a highly fragile, delicate product, comes from Argentina's far north as well as from Paraguay. Such items are so rare that they are sold only locally or in a few city curio shops.

The Argentine white-collar and industrial worker is in many ways like our own, with some notable exceptions. Argentines themselves will tell you that the lack of team spirit and cooperation which the Argentine considers a sign of his individualism makes it almost impossible for Argentine industry to achieve our type of group planning, assignment of authority, and minimum minute supervision.

Most Argentines do not believe that individual ability assures success in industrial enterprise. In business as well, many young men feel it is possible to get ahead only with the right family background or influence. They are convinced that those who are in power seek to hold them back.

Few Argentine business leaders train successors other than a son, a son-in-law, or an especially close relative. In most cases, an Argentine who moves up to a more important job is suspicious of the aims and desires of those below him and feels that they might be trying to force him out. This idea is seen in the political field: few of those who shared power with Perón in the first days of

the military regime are still active. Men who showed signs of strength or popularity have been forced out, lest they consider themselves partners in the regime's success rather than subsidiary figures.

Most Argentines prefer to plan a project and let somebody else worry about seeing it through. It has often been said that on paper they are wonderful administrators and production schedulers but getting the task accomplished is something else. This stems in part from the Spanish disgust for manual labor.

Argentines are neat, orderly, and systematic in operating their own personal business affairs. Most shops and their clerks like to write out bills and receipts for every order, change of routine, or stock notation. They are strong on filing systems, indexes, and reminders. Peuser, the big commercial stationer, has a Buenos Aires shop that is a marvel to behold. The National Cash Register Company has found that many an Argentine storekeeper buys an elaborate machine even before he buys his stock.

This does not necessarily mean that all financial accounts are perfect. Argentines freely admit that everybody who runs a business has to keep several sets of books. The favorite café story is that three is the minimum: "One for myself, another for my wife, and the third for the governmental inspectors who, naturally, expect to get the least."

Often Argentine white-collar or industrial workers start better than they finish. Workers on all levels are likely to begin with much more brilliance, enthusiasm, and interest than they can sustain after the project on which they are working becomes routine. When the

novelty wears off, and the thing that makes the job interesting disappears there is a sharp drop in output.

Most Argentine workers want fame and glory for themselves. They are not likely to give credit to equals or subordinates or to laud their achievements. Usually they consider themselves superior to the next fellow and take an inordinate pride in the clothes they wear to work, the food they bring to eat, and in their taste and opinions.

Betty de Sherbinin says the typical Argentine worker is competent and amenable. He has a "realistic frame of mind and is firmly convinced that everyone from the priest to his employer is working him for something. . . . He is a European transplanted to South America. He has a sense of decorum and dignity. . . . He is not stupid and has brought with him from Europe a broad hearty sense of life, and an ability to enjoy sun, red wine, good food, a joke, and the opposite sex. Despite the difficulties that have faced him in Argentina through the poor years in the 30's, despite the fact that he feels he's not getting his share of the prosperity of the present, he has in the past availed himself of what opportunities existed."

Many Argentine white-collar and industrial workers, especially those in Buenos Aires, are highly ambitious. They want to get ahead, the easy way if possible, with more effort if necessary. Many lower-paid civil service employees must get an extra job or two to make ends meet. They may not put in too many hours working, but they do aspire to rise and constantly look for new openings.

Adult night schools offering "improve yourself" techniques and correspondence courses are popular. Dale Carnegie courses have been given in Spanish for many

years. At the higher level, technological education has surged forward. Many a worker's son goes to the University of La Plata or Córdoba for specialized courses in electrical and mechanical engineering. The University of Buenos Aires offers other courses in civil and industrial engineering. Announcements of new developments are seen not only in the trade publications but in the daily papers as well.

The average Argentine city worker will tell you that he wants a house in the suburbs or a place in town with a garden, more money to raise his family more comfortably, and security that someone else, his employer or the government, will provide for the future.

He does not much care that his union is officially controlled or that his newspapers do not carry the truth he would like to be able to read. He is inclined to feel that while these things are regrettable, they are beyond his control. Of much more immediate interest is a raise which might allow him to move away from his crowded residence, a shorter work day and more holidays with pay. Because many factories are far from where their workers live, an Argentine generally leaves home earlier and gets home later than our worker does. He sees nothing wrong with taking advantage of every convenient fiesta.

Before 1943, no government had ever really taken an interest in the Argentine worker or his union—and the workers knew it. The dominant Confederation of Labor and other central trades unions had, with the help of the Socialists, won some labor laws: an eight-hour day, a forty-hour week, seven-hour shifts for night workers and six for those in dangerous occupations, pregnancy benefits, child labor rules, and the beginnings of a social secu-

rity fund. But one of Ramirez' first acts was to put all unions under control and confiscate their funds. Argentine workers had never been strongly militant, but they struck in protest—and were forced back to work at gunpoint. Perón was not so shortsighted: "I am a trade unionist," he declared—and went to work to take over the unions. Argentine workers had heard much about freedom, justice, and class struggle from their leaders, but had received little in the way of bread. Perón gave them bread.

As head of the new Department of Labor in the military government, Perón worked round the clock studying labor conditions. He decided that if the regime were to survive it had to have a popular base, and that base would be labor. Perón set up a National Institute of Social Security, began a low-cost housing project, decreed ten- to fifteen-day annual vacations for all workers, increased wages, lowered rents, etc. He participated in collective bargaining negotiations and helped organize new unions.

With his assistance the packing-house workers signed the first collective bargaining agreement in the industry. This new Federation de la Industria de la Carne became one of Perón's chief sources of support, and helped put him back in power after his return from the prison island of Martin Garcia in the Rio de la Plata on October 17, 1945. The rough, tough packing house workers from the southern Buenos Aires district of Avellaneda had rarely appeared in the elegant streets of the capital, but on that day they came in by the hundreds, coatless and well-armed to demonstrate for Perón. They were termed the *descamisados*, shirtless ones, and the word became a symbol of peronista social justice.

When American Federation of Labor investigators visited Argentina a few years ago, they were invited to take off their coats since it was a warm day. The next day peronista papers pictured the United States visitors in shirtsleeves, saying this demonstrated their support of peronista principles. The American Federation of Labor wrote a strongly anti-Perón report.

Despite the handouts and fine promises, some unions held out from the start. But by fair means and foul, the Perón government gradually took them all over. Labor leaders who resisted were imprisoned, exiled, persecuted, and replaced by Perón's followers. If a whole union held out against him, as some did, he built a new one in the same field and made it the recipient of wage boosts and workers' benefits. The old one, unable to do anything for its members, withered away. Even the dissident railroad engineers and firemen of La Fraternidad, one of the oldest and most independent unions in Argentina—and one of the last to be taken over by peronistas—went on strike, lost, and were drafted into the "civilian service of national defense." They were forced to return to their jobs or face court martial.

Today the government works overtime to make sure the workers are told it is thinking only of their welfare. The official press and propaganda bureau overlooks no opportunity to make it clear that all advantages came as gifts from Perón and Evita, the "defenders of Argentina's workers." In the controlled press, in speeches, in interviews, the worker is told that everything is done for his benefit.

The average man, dazzled by gifts, is shown models of dream housing projects like Ciudad Evita which will

be erected for all workers when Perón's plans are carried out. Workers are promised profit-sharing plans and more benefits, and they will usually cheer at the right time and vote the straight peronista ticket.

In mid-1951, in an attempt to get further labor support, as well as to keep labor in line, the president reportedly formed a private militia from the ranks of the Confederation and was arming it to the teeth. According to a story in a privately-circulated publication, *El Ciudadano* (The Citizen), published occasionally without official sanction by the Radical party, Perón drew up a confidential workers' defense plan to "defend the government in the event of military action against it."

Time Magazine reported that five thousand *descamisados* of "absolute confidence" were enrolled and divided into "shock troop" detachments, "special mission" units, and "reserves." A list was made of strategic zones, including rail and bus stations, ports, communications centers, power plants, food warehouses, water works, public markets, government offices, union headquarters, theaters and stadiums.

The new peronista militia got its first important workout during the September, 1951, abortive military uprising. The Confederation's boss, José Espejo, shouted the radio alarm and workers rushed to the Presidential Palace, jammed their big diesel busses across roads by which troops or tanks might have been moved on the capital, and succeeded in helping snuff out the revolt. Then they rounded up and arrested suspects, ran spot checks for illegal arms and so on. So successful was this first trial run that it was decided to improve the workers' equipment. *El Ciudadano* published the texts of three letters

from an arms firm promising delivery of five thousand pistols and two thousand automatic carbines to the Eva Perón Foundation.

How much the average worker has actually received from Perón is questionable. Urban workers have benefited more than rural workers—hence the trek from *estancia* to city. Most workers now have minimum wages, an eight-hour day with special overtime pay, paid vacations, and the *aguinaldo*, a Christmas bonus which equals one-twelfth of a year's pay. Some workers also get severance pay, and are guaranteed certain minimum working standards. The practical effect of all this social legislation varies, Argentines explain, pointing out that their civil service could "hardly be expected to enforce the letter of every law." When workers report a slight violation in a foreign-owned plant, government inspectors often swarm in to look things over and impose heavy fines, but they are not so strict with Argentine firms.

More men and women are working in Argentina today: for every 100 workers in 1943 there were 129 in 1951. Social legislation is estimated to cost 60 per cent of their basic payrolls, and the cost per man hour is nine times what it was in 1943. This was passed along to the consumer and helped create the wage-price spiral and chronic inflation.

Although President Perón claims Argentina's living costs are among the world's lowest, and says that government employees currently get 700 *pesos* a month compared to 280 in 1946, he ignores the fact that the dollar value of his workers' salaries has slipped after two official *peso* devaluations, and even more on the unofficial basis.

Little is printed in the Argentine press about the de-

teriorating international trade position or the country's falling industrial production. The only economic fact that gained wide circulation was the drought which occurred in 1949-50-51.

But the Argentine wage-earner knows how much more it costs him to live. Milk and butter became increasingly hard to buy in 1951. Meat could be purchased, but often only on payment of a bonus to the butcher and not at the controlled price. Textiles and clothing were getting scarcer and more expensive. Railroad fares were increased up to 50 per cent just after the 1951 presidential elections. Even controlled prices on many foods were raised during the year. And living costs were overtaking, if they had not already passed, the increased wages granted by the government.

In revealing his economic plans for 1952, President Perón told the workers they must keep their demands to a minimum, increase production, and practice the "inflexible austerity" which had been prescribed as the remedy for the nation's economic ills. The newspaper *Democracia* urged men to have their suits turned instead of buying new ones, and women were told to do their own hair and nails because anything else is "waste which jeopardizes the national economy." It was the new clothes and the chance to go to the beauty parlor which poorer Argentines had wanted so much. So *Democracia* dramatized the Argentine housewife as the "Sentinel of the Fatherland's Economy," and "Mistress of the National Destiny." When her neighbor buys a new hat, the ideal housewife deliberately flaunts her old one, keeping her good clothes for special occasions, the paper declared. "Nobody notices a woman who goes marketing in silk and high heels: it is

the girl in the housedress who gets the complimentary *piropos*."

In the economic crisis of 1952, many of the workers' advantages seemed to be drying up. Whether or not, like the *estanciero*, the laborer has enough in reserve so that the pinch is not too great no one can tell.

With all the living cost increases, the Argentine worker could still be regarded as better fed, better housed, and more self-satisfied than any similar group in Latin America. But this is based on a fairly low standard. Argentines tell you: "As long as our workers have full stomachs you are not likely to find revolt. But let the pinch come—and then anything can happen."

The Family Is Everything

SIT DOWN at dinner with a typical Argentine family, whether the family is poor, middle class, or in the landed *estanciero* group, and several things will probably strike you at once.

Your host's mother will be in the place of honor. Children old enough to sit up by themselves will have chairs. The table itself will be dressed with the finest linens and silver the family can afford. No matter how poor the host, he will probably serve several courses. And in nine cases out of ten you will have wine. Cousins, uncles, aunts, and other in-laws are likely to be present. Dress will be more formal than in the United States. The children will talk, but there will be far less of the easy give-and-take of the *Yanqui* household, for regardless of what they do out-

side, the children well know—having been taught from birth—that their parents' rule dominates. Papa is head, mama is his deputy, and *his* mother, as the oldest and most respected member of the circle, is the queen.

The authority of the father exercises a great influence in Argentine life. Families of Spanish, Italian, and French descent are closest-knit and most conventional. Those of northern European and British background are apt to incline more toward our own standards.

Under the "father rule" set up by the civil code, Papa has long exercised the same kind of unlimited and unquestioned authority so often employed by the President of the Republic in running the government. President Perón today uses it in even greater degree and many of his followers call him "Papa Perón." But the point so often overlooked by North Americans is that Argentines, who have known such authority all their lives, do not resent it or think it strange and new.

Father rule and command makes the family a kind of dictatorship in miniature. Depending on the personality of Papa, it may at times be benevolent, at others tyrannical. Papa will speak of his place as "*mi casa*"—my house. There is no real word for home in Spanish. *Hogar*, which is employed in writing, actually means hearth, or fireplace. Except in reference to the popular magazine of the same name, the word rarely appears in conversation.

In the Argentine home no member can make an important decision without Father's approval. If, as sometimes happens, family disputes go to the courts, again and again Father's rule, albeit arbitrary, has been upheld. True, he can, and often does, make his wife the executive officer

who handles the actual administration. She receives the freely-offered aid, advice, and sometimes overruling opinion of *his* mother, who is likely to regard her son as still subject to her admonishment irrespective of his age.

Today, as the family becomes more of a mutual council, the Argentine wife is beginning to emerge from her traditionally inferior position. Nevertheless, in most of the older families, especially outside Buenos Aires, the tradition, which is encouraged by both State and Church, changes slowly.

From childhood, Argentine girls are taught that orders must be accepted even from baby brother, because he is a man. Except among progressive city families of means, a young girl of "respectable family" always has a chaperone. Sports, which are becoming more and more popular among many *señoritas*, are tending to minimize the chaperone's role and make informal introductions possible, for, as many a young Argentine woman will point out: "After all, she cannot follow you on a bicycle." Even today, however, girls seldom see young men after dark and they have little time for close friendships with the opposite sex until they are close to the marriageable age.

Argentine boys and girls grow up carefully separated and remain that way. A young man who seeks to come calling in the conventional Argentine family is either welcomed as a prospective bridegroom or simply not received. At the parish or public school a girl is given a thorough training in home economics—sewing, cooking, running a household, and managing servants. A girl from middle or upper-income families may study enough

music, history, and literature to take part in intelligent conversation, but her most important lessons are designed to make her an attractive and successful wife.

Most Argentine *señoritas* are not supposed to have ideas about careers or social freedom, despite the increasing exceptions to the rule. Although marriage or the convent are no longer the sole alternatives, most girls are engaged at sixteen and married before twenty. Family matchmaking is still common. Argentine law permits boys of fourteen and girls of twelve to marry with parental consent. When parents do not approve, the official minimum is twenty-two for both. While early marriage is encouraged, child weddings are no longer fashionable. Even so, an unmarried girl of twenty-one is a rarity. If she lacks a ring at twenty-five she is considered an old maid.

Not many *señoritas* are specifically ordered to marry the man their parents choose. Yet, among the distinguished old families of Argentina, the young people are likely to meet only those who have been approved by their parents. Thus, mother, father, and grandmother can more or less determine ultimate selection. While a marriage may not be forced if the girl and boy dislike each other, the fact is that generally the parents do manage a compromise.

Intermarriage between upper-class families is part of the Argentine tradition. Those who defy it by eloping or otherwise circumventing parental wishes are few indeed. Generally, love and desirability are reconciled. In such cases the dowry is an important factor.

A little farther down the economic ladder in middle-class families, standards are beginning to inch toward those in the United States. Social ambition motivates

many. When an Argentine family becomes more prosperous, it usually wants to marry its daughters off to young men with more social or economic prestige than it possesses. Argentines consider it a special mark of distinction to be connected with an aristocratic family. Any Argentine who is even remotely connected with such a family always manages to mention his relations in conversation, so that you will be aware of the fact that he is not simply a *fulano de tal*—a somebody or other.

Argentines have an enormous interest in society news, especially as it is glowingly detailed in such publications as *Atlantida*, *Saber Vivir* and *El Hogar*. Every important wedding, engagement, or dinner gets pages of pictures, plus a full description of who were there and what they wore. There is no society gossip, however: the Walter Winchell approach is unknown in Argentina and there are no Cholly Knickerbockers.

Even poor families like to stage elaborate church weddings. Even though the boy's salary is low and the girl's family poor, pride demands that appearances be maintained. Sometimes the family may postpone the wedding a year or more in order to scrape up enough money to provide a big church ceremony with white tie and tails for the groom and a wedding dress with a train for the bride.

Once the honeymoon is over, the husband's family takes control. In the United States a bride who does not get along well with her in-laws will usually put up a good front and cut contacts to a minimum. In the Argentine, the bride's sense of obligation to her husband's clan above her own is paramount. Many a boy's mother takes full advantage of her privilege to run her son's household

with an iron hand. She may even rule on the wife's clothes, friends and opinions.

In many larger families several married sons, their wives and children, may live under the same roof. One well-known wealthy family occupies an entire apartment house in Buenos Aires especially built for them. Each son or daughter has a single floor of the large luxurious structure. This exemplifies the Argentines' desire to maintain the family as a unit.

The breaking up of the old houses and the increase in apartment living is, of course, changing this practice. Yet young people in Argentina cannot escape completely. A New York couple can and often does move to Chicago, Detroit, or Los Angeles. A Philadelphia pair can move to San Francisco without completely changing their lives. A young married couple living in Buenos Aires would have to make serious sacrifices if they moved to another city.

The wife has the responsibility of running the house, arranging the formal entertaining, and managing the children. The husband checks and countermands when he feels it necessary. Many Argentine husbands ask for a list of their wife's intimate friends and decide whom they may see and whom they must not see. One sees women smoking only in the cosmopolitan circles in Buenos Aires.

Not until the Argentine wife reaches upper-middle age and heads her own family does she obtain the full rewards of dignity, responsibility, and standing which are regarded as compensating factors in Argentine marriage.

This closeness of the family tie creates a social self-sufficiency that leaves little time for contact with out-

siders. So much so, in fact, that most foreigners seldom succeed in establishing an intimate friendship with any Argentine family. The Germans succeeded better than most others because their wives and daughters did not seek the independence enjoyed by American and English women and thus were not likely to spread advanced ideas among Argentine women.

The conservative Argentine believes strongly in the virtue of womanhood and the sanctity of the home. Even in Buenos Aires he disapproves of innocent luncheons of married women with male friends. He believes platonic friendship between men and women is impossible.

Films, fashion magazines, and visitors from North America are encouraging Argentine women to be more daring and audacious. A group of unescorted young Argentine women will today have tea, luncheon, or cocktails together in places where, not many years before, the only women were the mistresses of their fathers and brothers. One also sees two Argentine couples going out together of an evening, the double-date eliminating the need of a chaperone when the families of one couple are known to the families of the other.

Argentine wives who are smarter than their husbands (it does happen there too) rarely demonstrate the fact, at least not if they want to keep harmony. The wife is always expected to think first of her husband, then of herself. Her role, she is taught, is important, but always subordinate. The one thing she is encouraged to exhibit with full approval is how much she loves her lord and master.

Flattering the husband's ego is the prime essential in a successful Argentine marriage. The best way an Argentine wife can demonstrate this is to have plenty of chil-

dren. Many an Argentine family considers three a minimum: they usually have five or six.

Food at home will be prepared especially for the husband's taste and the house is managed to suit his convenience. The Argentine wife's non-homemaking activities—charity work under the direction of the Church, bridge parties, teas, social calls, or visits from the family—are generally confined to the hours between lunch at home and the customary late dinner.

Until just a few years ago women were not allowed to drive their own cars. Club and civic activities were unknown. Eva Perón succeeded in getting suffrage for Argentine women. They voted for the first time in the November, 1951, presidential elections and elected twenty-nine women to Congress. They were expected to—and many did—vote for Perón. Before the army forced Evita to give up her vice-presidential candidacy, she counted on the women's vote to elect her.

Foreign residents, especially the North Americans, helped bring about this emancipation of women—a fact which caused resentment in many older, more conservative families. They do not like to see Argentine women reading more, having their own ideas, demanding their own rights, and “flaunting their revolt” against old customs.

Most United States women who marry Argentines are astonished and shocked by their husbands' frequent love affairs. One husband defensively explained: “It's the women who marry—we remain single. Our wives are expected to keep their knowledge of such things to themselves. We Argentines are men first, husbands second.”

If he is not able to boast of his pre-marital affairs and

if, after a proper period, he does not take a mistress, many an Argentine male thinks he has failed to demonstrate his virility and to be successful. Having a love affair might ruin an American politician, but *not* having one might make a Latin politician suspect. The names of favored mistresses of important Argentines are generally open secrets, and no one regards this as at all unusual. However, the rules governing such affairs are as ironclad as diplomatic protocol.

Ruth and Leonard Greenup give some interesting details on this subject. "A man may take his mistress to a night-club, to dinner, or even the theater. But he must not escort her to an official function or a big party where wives are present. If he has taken his mistress to a dine-and-dance place and there encounters a married couple he knows, he refrains from speaking to them. They also ignore him. Yet, the mistress is not cut off from society. She may act as the man's unofficial hostess when he entertains a group of men friends. If other women are there, none is likely to be the wife of any man present."

The mistress of many an Argentine persuades her man to finance her in a little shop or underwrite her career on the stage. Some of these clandestine alliances last for years, strengthened by bonds of deep affection. To educated Argentines the prevalence of the double-standard does not mean moral decadence. Visiting North Americans are told that it is no worse for an Argentine husband to keep a mistress for twenty years or so than it is for an American to live legally—by means of divorces—with three or four women for an equal length of time. Argentine men insist they honor and respect the home and the family far more than American men.

Since it is legally impossible to get a divorce in Argentina, our high divorce rate and the fantastic stories about it so widely publicized continually shock and astonish the Argentines. They raise eyebrows at Hollywood films in which wives publicly flirt with other men and husbands have affairs with their friends' wives. Moreover, in a Hollywood production, they point out, a man expects his wife to work; if need be she is his partner in crime. In an Argentine film, the heroine is always the bird in the gilded cage, worshipped from afar.

Argentine men are among the world's most jealous. Many Argentines say the main reason they would not want North American wives is because American girls have so many men friends and hear words of love from many men before they marry. "The American husband," an Argentine said, "likes to think he has won his wife against a field of competitors. We demand brides who have never thought of anyone but us. We may be fooling ourselves, it is true. But we like it that way."

Having been brought up in the traditional way, most Argentines wives willingly accept the conventional, unwritten rules. Many an inter-American marriage has been wrecked by the unwillingness of North American brides to conform. Argentines educated in the United States frankly discuss the reasons.

Their chief complaint against North American wives is their independence and their lack of obedience and respect for their husbands. "They want to have their own friends, bank accounts, and outside interests," one Argentine explained. "They want their own cars, and even to use them after dark. We do not like that."

The following characteristic remarks illustrate the Argentine's attitude toward North American wives:

"American women lack fire and passion."

"They have no manners."

"They insist upon drinking and smoking like men."

"They are too frank and easy in their relationships with men."

"They have too much education and do not respect their husbands' opinions sufficiently."

"They do not know how to dress properly."

On one occasion when it was pointed out that visiting girls from the United States certainly draw appreciative and often poetic compliments, one Argentine answered: "True. We like such things in *other* women, but not in our wives!"

The attitude of a growing number of Argentine women toward North American wives and husbands differs sharply. What many Argentine women admire about American husbands is the fact that it is not customary for them to keep mistresses. The *casa chica*, or little house, for a mistress is the exception, not the rule in the United States. Another point repeatedly mentioned is the fact that most American husbands have few secrets from their wives and share their pleasures and interests. One woman said: "When an American plans an evening of dancing, theater, or other entertainment, he invariably includes his wife. The Argentine rarely considers taking her along. He may come home for lunch every day. But often he leaves his wife five nights out of seven while he goes to the café or the club, to sports events, or to a meeting with friends."

"American husbands," one woman explained, "are far

more dependable. They may lack the courtly gesture or the ability to whisper enough well-turned compliments, but they make it up in other ways." "We like the freedom American husbands give us," another said, "freedom to have an opinion and to express it, and to discuss family affairs without fear of being arbitrarily overruled. And mostly, freedom to be men's equals, not their chattels."

The Church Is Everywhere

EVERY ARGENTINE, rich, poor, or middle-class, is strongly affected in everything he does and thinks by the Catholic Church. It asserts its power at every important event in his life—birth, baptism, confirmation, marriage, and death. It is also very much a part of his ordinary life. He sees dignitaries of the Church officiating at the opening of Congress and blessing the swords at military and naval academy graduations. When an Argentine completes a new building, he often feels it essential to ask a priest to bless it. Priests are present at the opening of many a new shop in Buenos Aires and of almost any kind of structure in a remote village. Priests offer invocations at festivals and labor meetings.

To the Argentine the Church is more than the center of his religion. It is a culture that molds him and leaves

a lasting impression on his mind, body, and soul. The Church's code of ethics sets his standards—whether observed or ignored. It prescribes his favorite madonna and the St. Christopher medal he carries. Visible reminders of the faith are everywhere—the cross on the wall, the tiny figure in a corner niche, the black-robed divinity student on the street, and the church on the plaza of every town. Today the Church and State in Argentina are more closely linked than they have been for generations, and the tie between priest and layman is stronger than ever.

The influence of the Church and its role as the spiritual anchor in the Argentine's daily life begins at christening. Almost before they are able to talk most Argentines begin to absorb the Church's principles and ideas from mother, maid, and grandparents. From them the child learns to cross himself before the madonna, to repeat the proper prayers, and to know his own patron saint. The chances are that the Argentine boy or girl does not go to a parochial school, for Argentina has relatively fewer schools of that kind than the United States.

A *porteño* youngster's first remembered experience may be a visit to the great Cathedral on the Plaza de Mayo. He soon gets to know its quiet interior, hung with richly woven and embroidered banners, its tremendous candlesticks and lanterns, its thousands of candles and crucifixes. He may be taken to see a pontifical high mass attended by the President of the Republic and his Cabinet, who arrive in horse-drawn carriages as thousands look on. The rich vestments, the exquisite copes and mitres are part of a colorful pageantry which is, in its own way, probably the closest thing to some of Britain's tradi-

tional ceremonies as anything that exists in the Americas. The Church in Buenos Aires, reflecting *porteño* sophistication, does not stage the primitive processions you see in the Indian countries of Latin America.

Churchgoing has social as well as spiritual significance. In Buenos Aires as well as in the smallest interior communities mothers and sisters go to church far more often than fathers and brothers. A boy may have to attend church, but as he grows older he will probably fall into his father's and older brother's habit of turning up just before services end. The young *caballeros* stand near the church entrance to await the *señoritas*. When they appear there are the usual demure nods, the inquiries about father, mother, uncle, aunt and cousin, and related small talk. Often couples visit the nearby *confitería* for a mid-day ice and even dance under the watchful eye of the chaperone.

The most memorable personal church event in the eyes of Argentines is their marriage ceremony. By Argentine law, couples must first be married by the local *registrador civil*. However, good Catholics do not accept this as sufficient, and bride and groom rarely leave for their honeymoon until the religious ceremony is performed by the priest, usually the day after the civil act.

The always conservative Church has the strongest interest in preserving the traditions of Argentine family life, for its strength comes from this very source. Church leaders successfully fought divorce laws long before the military regime came into power. Divorce is traditionally anathema to the Church, and it is still banned today primarily because of the Church's influence.

Felix Weil points out that the Church's preponderant

position does not mean that all Argentines are devout or regular churchgoers. However, "on the whole, good Argentines consider it a matter of social esteem and propriety to belong to the Church, and to accept the clergy's 'spiritual guidance.' Not to do so would be tantamount to remaining seated when the National Anthem is played. It is just not done—except by open non-conformists."

Two groups are most loyal to the Church, Hubert Herring notes. First are the top provincial families, who have the best names, the most land, the biggest houses. To them the Church is an instrument of regularity, discipline, and conservatism which they know will help safeguard the nation from intellectual dissent. Second is the group of the inconspicuous faithful, the Church's chief support in every land. These are the women in black on the streets of the provincial towns who lead their docile children into the big edifice on the plaza. These are the dutiful *peons*, strong in faith and simple in mind who have, in the past, accepted the traditional paternalism of the priest and the *estanciero* as natural.

Even those Argentines who follow Church precepts most closely feel their religion is very different from that of most other Latins. They regard the Church in Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Latin America's west coast countries as a primitive institution; they think it is so corrupted by Indian pageantry and symbolism as to be almost another religion.

Outside Buenos Aires the Church's influence on every individual is even stronger than in the capital. In every block of staunchly-conservative Córdoba, for instance, you are likely to meet a priest, dressed in his long, belted cassock and round bowler hat with a curled brim. Near

the Cathedral on the Plaza de San Martín you will see many nuns and scores of children in parochial school uniforms—the boys in dark suits and short trousers with stockings reaching above the knee, the girls in high-necked serge dresses. When the occasion comes they will be dressed in their white first-communion finery and have stiff, formal photographs taken by the itinerant street photographers. The hierarchy in Córdoba even has its own newspaper, *Los Principios*, which in some ways is more conservative than the Buenos Aires Catholic daily, *El Pueblo*.

In many small Argentine towns sacred church relics form an essential part of local tradition. In Catamarca, for example, the heart of Friar Mamerto Esquiú, churchman and orator, is highly revered. His birthplace is enshrined, and his statue stands in the plaza where it is visited by thousands every year. The religion of the mountainous town is saturated with a very personal belief which revolves around the tiny wooden figure of La Virgen de la Valle, the Lady of the Valley. The grotto where she was discovered and the Cathedral of Catamarca are besieged by pilgrims who seek her favor. They bring her jewels, rich clothing, and other gifts.

In rural communities the rich *estancieros* often adopt the local church as part of their feudal pattern. They are likely to have more control over the priest than he has over them. The owner of an *estancia*, with his tremendous economic power, is naturally a dominant force in the region. The Church depends on his gifts and his contributions to its charities more than he depends on the local priest for salvation. The *estanciero* is also likely to have more education and experience than the priest. However,

if the priest has a strong personality he may exercise power and entertain important families and be entertained by them as well.

There are relatively few churches in rural Argentina. In all three Patagonian territories in the 1940's there were only ten churches along the coast, only one on the edge of the mountains, and none in the interior. Although the people are practically churchless, they are not irreligious or pagan, except in the most isolated Indian areas. You see religious books, pictures and images in most homes.

In the United States, all income groups support their church. But in Argentina financial support comes chiefly from the wealthy with token contributions from the middle class and the poor. The Church is usually the only institution to which rich Argentines do contribute; they seldom give money to universities or foundations as do our Fords and Rockefellers.

Argentine landowners have always insisted on separation of Church and State, not because of their democratic principles, but because they considered government policy their prerogative. Argentines have never had a violent clash between Church and State as have Mexicans and to a lesser degree Chileans. Leaders like Mitre, Sarmiento, and Rivadavia opposed Church domination, though they themselves were Catholics. In 1826-27, President Rivadavia limited the powers of the Church and instituted certain reforms. He ended direct state allowances to priests, abolished tithes and ecclesiastical courts, and seized some superfluous monasteries.

In 1884 it was decided—presumably once and for all—that public schools would be secular and would not teach religion, though Church schools would not be forbidden.

After the Pope's representative was expelled for pressing the issue of religious education too vigorously that year, virtually everyone took the solution for granted. Clericalism and anti-clericalism was hardly a serious political issue.

North Americans have a hard time understanding the exact relations between Argentine Church and State. The constitution states that "The Federal government supports the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church," but Argentines insist that does not mean Catholicism is the official religion. "The President must be a Roman Catholic," they explain, "but not his cabinet ministers or other officials." The President names the bishops of the cathedrals from lists submitted by the Senate, approves or rejects papal decrees, and submits to the Pope the names from which he must choose certain chief members of the hierarchy.

Sometimes this caused friction between the Holy See and the government. Often the Papal nuncio enjoyed far greater status with one President than another. The nuncio, as in many other countries, is the dean of the diplomatic corps, whether in the country for a week or for years. The Cardinal outranks every Argentine but the President at all functions.

From the very beginning of the military regime in 1943, General Ramirez and his friends set out to win the Church's support. They declared their government to be a Catholic, corporate state founded on Hispanic tradition based on social precepts of the Church. Ramirez demonstrated his Catholicism by taking a priest, Father James Wilkinson, to the Casa Rosada with him. For a time the "Grey Eminence" appeared behind the scenes, the central figure in many a whispered story. When the tales

grew embarrassing, Wilkinson departed, but the alliance between the Catholic and the military hierarchy continued.

It reached its peak when Ramirez decreed that religious instruction be given in every school. This reversal of Argentine tradition fell like a bombshell on the nation. Church leaders who had long assumed the question of religious education was closed could hardly believe it. Luis Cardinal Copello congratulated Ramirez on the decree, but the clergy was divided on the government's attempt to associate itself with official Catholicism.

In general, however, the hierarchy went along with the militarists and later with Perón because they also opposed the Communists and the anti-clerical Radicals and Socialists. Catholics wanted financial aid for their institutions and they believed religious education would save the souls of irreligious Argentines.

During Perón's first election campaign, Cardinal Copello never specifically endorsed him. But a pastoral letter, signed by most of the highest Church authorities, demanded that no Catholic vote for candidates whose programs included legalization of divorce, separation of Church and State, or secular education. This broke the solid Conservative front and won Perón many a vote, especially from poorer Argentines who are inclined to accept most of what the Church recommends.

Soon after the election, Perón's congressmen converted into a law the 1943 decree which imposed religious instruction on public and private primary and secondary schools. The constitutional provision for freedom of religion was by-passed by a clause permitting students whose fathers "manifest opposition" to Catholicism to substitute

classes in "moral instruction." The law also provided salaries for the priests who taught these courses.

The day after the Senate passed the law, Cardinal Copello and the bishops of Buenos Aires and Rosario and the archbishops of Santa Fé, Córdoba, Paraná, and San José visited the President. They presented him with a memorial and thanked him for putting the country "once more on the road of its religious tradition." They commended him for having given "a more solid base to social justice, to the unity of the Argentine people, to the true fraternity of the American continent."

Perón appointed "ecclesiastical advisers" to various government institutions, even to the Transport Corporation of Buenos Aires, which runs all the city's trolleys, busses, and subways. Priests attended every kind of Peronista party meeting and rally to give their blessing to the proceedings, thus creating the appearance of Church support for everything the government does.

One of the first leading priests to come out for Perón was Father Virgilio Filippo of Buenos Aires. A strong, often bitter orator, he supported Perón so fervently he caused some of his women parishioners to walk out on his sermon just before the election of 1945. He appeared at political demonstrations and awarded prizes and medals to outstanding factory workers. In a sense Father Filippo resembled our Father Coughlin. In 1948 he was elected a peronista deputy from the City of Buenos Aires, winning by the slate's smallest majority. So far as Argentines know, no attempts to restrain him have ever been made by the Church.

To win church friendship, Perón also encouraged such things as the religious Easter Week parades through the

streets of the capital. Before this such parades were virtually unknown in Buenos Aires. Easter Week was the *semana de turismo* (tourist's week) when thousands of *porteños* jammed trains, busses, and cars for visits to the Córdoba Hills or Mar del Plata, and hundreds of Argentines from the interior visited the metropolis.

Democratic Argentines and foreigners have noted that the Church has increased all of its activities. Many of them believe it has more and more influence in the daily lives of the people.

Church leaders point out that the Church established Argentina's first educational institutions, helped set up its earliest communities, and introduced its civilizing influence to the Indians. They insist it has always had a leading role in the country's history and philosophy.

But they admit that the affinity of many priests for the Perón regime stemmed from several immediate reasons. First, many Argentine priests were Spaniards or had been educated in Italy or Spain during the rise of Mussolini and Franco and came to favor military regimes. Second, many of the clergy viewed democracy with skepticism, partly because their chief support came from the wealthy, landowning oligarchs. Third, many of the European-trained priests feared that Freemasonry, which they associated with British and United States opposition to Catholicism, might gain strength under an administration which was overly friendly with Washington.

Argentine Catholics are by no means united in their viewpoints. The most outstanding anti-peronista in the clergy is Monseñor Miguel de Andrea, Bishop of Tenemos. He was the only Argentine bishop who refused to sign the pastoral letter which favored Perón's election in

1946. Later some five hundred Catholic laymen defied their clerical leaders and signed a manifesto denouncing Perón. The bishop's outspoken defense of freedom reputedly cost him a promotion. During the election campaign he warned workers not to sell their freedom for a handful of benefits. He declared that class hatred was "being set on fire dangerously and the fire is being increased by racial hatred. . . . It is urgent that this fever be stopped before the delirium causes irreparable harm." In sermons and pamphlets, he opposed the government's efforts to gain control of the trade unions, which he thought should be autonomous.

For most of his seventy-five years, Bishop de Andrea has worked to help the underprivileged. In 1922 he founded the Federation of Catholic Workers Associations, a women's trade union of Buenos Aires. His home for single working girls is the only private institution of its kind which was not absorbed by Eva Perón's social welfare foundation. His national and international standing was so high the Peróns dared not touch him.

During the latter part of President Perón's first administration, relations between peronistas and the Church cooled. A storm broke when Perón sought to legalize prostitution, which had been outlawed in 1936. The labor unions demanded the red-light houses be reopened and inspected, and the government sponsored the idea "to improve public health." But the Church raised the cry "National shame!" and the militant Acción Católica Argentina violently opposed the scheme. This time the President backed down.

But the biggest cause of friction came from Perón and Evita's attempts to lift *peronismo* from the status of a

political doctrine to an article of faith for all Argentines. "The implication," Robert J. Alexander said, is "that what Perón and the peronistas do is not to be questioned, not even by the Church. . . . If the trend toward a totalitarian form of Peronismo continues, the teaching of that 'one true faith of all Argentines' is likely to come into conflict with the teaching of the faith of the Church."

Fleur Cowles asserts that the Peróns succeeded in hypnotizing not only gullible political followers but many of the "unsuspecting religious." "They have managed, somehow," she says, "to let their subjects continue to cross themselves reverently, to kneel solemnly in their churches, and yet everything is arranged so that, simultaneously, many of the same people have been taught to recognize Perón as a living saint. The cult for the Perón-idol has been developed with brilliant skill, for it 'allows' the church its place and its 'face' while allowing Perón to go beyond the prerogatives of Catholicism."

But Evita's deification of her husband annoyed the priests. Their voting instructions to their parishioners in the November, 1951, election were remarkably noncommittal.

Argentine charity and philanthropy belongs in our consideration of the Church and its effect on the daily lives of Argentines because the Church has long been the most favored recipient of benefactions and the most important of benefactors in the Argentine scheme of things.

As noted previously, relatively few Argentines ever give large sums to local universities, schools, hospitals, or most other institutions. Special drives are held annually for such groups as the Patronato de Leprosos which aids the country's lepers, but appeals such as our Community

Chest, cancer and heart funds, Boy Scout Campaigns and TB stamp sales have never existed. Money is often raised through a lottery which can run into sizable figures.

Most Argentines prefer to handle their own charitable giving. Rarely will they pass a beggar without tossing him some coins, since they feel this brings good luck as well as God's blessing. Unlike other Latin capitals, Buenos Aires had few alms seekers even before the Peróns established their own approach to charity and declared that outright solicitation was beneath Argentine dignity and created an undesirable impression on visitors.

From 1823, when President Rivadavia founded the Sociedad de Beneficencia and turned it over to the "ladies of Buenos Aires," the Society of Charity was Argentina's leading charitable organization. The ladies contributed their money and their time, and except for the period of the Rosas dictatorship they operated it autonomously for the good of the poor and the sick. Traditionally, the President's wife was named its head. When Perón took office, however, the dowagers neglected to offer Evita the honorary presidency. Three months later Perón appointed a government official to take over the venerable group and Senator Diego Molinari denounced the ladies as silly, useless females.

Two years later Evita established her own Social Aid Foundation, with what was announced as a few thousand of her own *pesos*. By 1950 it had become one of the country's biggest businesses. Today the Foundation reportedly collects more than one hundred million dollars a year. Its biggest support comes from the General Confederation of Labor, whose six million members frequently give a day's pay in connection with some benefit

received. If employees want a labor conflict satisfactorily solved they give the Foundation a present. They generally get what they want. Congress gave the Foundation the right to collect certain taxes and to take over any private charity. Representatives of the Foundation often call on businessmen for huge contributions. If they demur, government inspectors discover deficiencies in washrooms, lighting, or building construction, fine the owners, and order repairs. This can be very costly. Next time the businessman is more cooperative.

Someone once declared Evita ran the Foundation "as casually as a bride's checking account." When Fleur Cowles asked Evita about her records of the Foundation's funds and spending, the First Lady replied: "Keeping books on charity is capitalist nonsense! I just use the money for the poor. I cannot stop to count it."

The Foundation invaded every possible Argentine activity, including politics. By eliminating almost all other private charity and welfare organizations, Evita managed to go directly to the masses. Every expectant mother and every anaemic child were told that they received medical care and assistance "because Perón and his wife love them and because a regime of social justice rules the country." The victims of any fire, flood, or train wreck get the immediate help of the Foundation. The poor of Paris, Vienna, and the Canary Islands received gifts from Argentina's beautiful Santa Claus. Planes bringing medicine, food, and blankets from the Foundation arrived promptly after such Latin American disasters as the Ecuadorian earthquake and the Bolivian revolution.

There are scores of huge Foundation warehouses in the capital and other cities which bulge with clothes,

shoes, and peronista tracts for the needy. The Foundation operates its own clothing factory and distribution stations, its own hospitals, nurse schools, clinics, and drug dispensaries. Not long ago it established a chain of grocery stores where, as noted previously, packaged food sells for lower than prevailing prices. Evita simply told the manufacturers what food she wanted and how much she would pay. The Ciudad de Mexico department store is now run by the Foundation, and there have been reports it plans to acquire Harrod's and Gath y Chaves.

In her office in the Department of Labor, Evita personally gave help to the needy one day a week. A carefully screened lineup awaited her attention. As each person approached the First Lady, an aide handed her a small card stating the problem. After chatting a few minutes, Evita handed out hundred- or fifty-*peso* notes or issued orders to her subordinates to provide a home, food, or job. She did it in the lady-of-the-manor tradition, not unlike the *estancieros* who presented gifts to their workers when they felt the time was ripe. Evita made her Foundation a very personal operation. The President rarely interfered.

On the theory that the poor must have the best, she built luxurious homes for the aged, for unmarried mothers, for working girls. She gave a few of them excellent accommodations and, of necessity, promised the others that their turn would come soon.

An oft-displayed example is the model Children's Town in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. It has tiny houses, shops, banks, a school, a church and jail, luxurious dormitories, dining-rooms and playrooms. In theory, two hundred poor children aged from two to five live there, and eight

hundred more come in by the day. After a two-hour tour one visiting diplomat's wife commented: "This is the wish fulfillment of a little girl who never had a doll house of her own."

According to her newspaper, *Democracia*, Evita's last thought was for the poor. The night before she died, it reported, she asked to be alone with her husband to tell him: "No matter what happens, the only thing I ask you is never to abandon the *grasitas*, humble ones." The President announced later that anyone needing help should continue to write to his deceased wife and aid would be given in her name.

How the Argentines Are Educated

ATTENDING A late show in an Argentine theater one evening, an American visitor spotted a youngster he thought should have been home in bed. Casually he asked his parents why the boy was not resting up for school at that hour.

"Pero, no, Señor—this is a most important part of his education . . . he will probably learn more here than he would in any classroom."

Many an Argentine parent believes that education is only partly formal, and that much of the real instruction their children need for daily life must come from outside the school. Yet despite this, the average Argentine is greatly interested in education, and seeks to make it available to his children with all the facilities at his command.

Since the time of President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, who died in 1888, education has been a powerful force in Argentina. Today, under the military regime, Sarmiento does not get the attention he did when he was honored throughout the hemisphere as one of the most notable teachers any American nation has yet produced. But education continues to receive a major share of the official budget—about \$300,000,000 a year.

One of Sarmiento's chief reasons for wanting to develop Argentina's schools was that in his time the country's best schools were all controlled by foreigners. Argentines, then as now, rarely established private institutions of learning. Foreigners established them for their own children. The foreign schools, excellent as some were, helped perpetuate foreign customs through the second and even third generation. Argentina's public schools have since gradually overcome some of this influence, but it has never been completely eradicated. Even today foreign schools are highly important in Argentina. Many a well-to-do family which cannot afford to send its youngsters abroad to study will send them to the United States, French, or English schools in Buenos Aires.

Today, the American schools in Argentina are becoming increasingly popular. There are three principal reasons.

1. In these private schools Argentine youngsters meet other children from well-to-do families.

2. Argentines believe their children can more easily learn other languages where there are small classes and foreign teachers as well as contact with English-speaking classmates. This, they add, is a factor of no small import

in a country where no man is considered educated unless he speaks two or three languages fluently.

3. Many Argentines want their children to graduate from American colleges or universities, and for this they need proper preparation.

Some Argentines like the idea that the American high schools in their country are co-educational and have the same kind of bands, cheerleaders, football games, and dances as they do in the United States. Furthermore, the American schools do not require the white pinafore uniform that Argentine students wear in their schools. Such Argentines see nothing wrong in schoolgirls of twelve using lipstick; others consider this utterly shocking. The government has not interfered with the private schools, but it does require that all pupils in American, British, and other foreign schools pass local official examinations each year.

Education in Argentina is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of six and fourteen. In Buenos Aires and interior cities the law is strictly enforced; but the farther away from the metropolis schools are, the less the law is observed. In some remote areas education is sketchy. There are not enough schools or truant officers.

Official sources say that attendance in all schools through university level is 2,500,000, but the figure may be distorted. There are no certain figures on how many start and complete primary school. All children who have ever attended school are automatically considered literate.

Primary education includes two years of kindergarten. Five years of general primary education are comple-

mented by two years of practical training. Specially-designed programs for adults are offered.

Secondary education at a *colegio* or *liceo* consists of a minimum five-year course; three years of general studies are supplemented by two years of specialized work. The curriculum for both boys and girls is similar, including sciences, languages, music, drawing, mathematics, history, and geography.

In his first five-year plan President Perón provided scholarships for children whose parents cannot afford to pay for their secondary training and for free transportation, meals, and textbooks.

Beyond the primary and secondary schools are specialized schools which offer two-year training courses. These include normal schools for future teachers of primary grades and commercial schools which offer accounting, mechanical drawing and stenography, as well as more general instruction in such fields as history, economics, and mathematics. Technical schools teach theory and practice in all branches of industry.

It is said that only one out of every eleven Argentines goes to secondary school. Still, Argentina's educational system is far more advanced than that of most Latin countries. Most Argentine youngsters, rich or poor, start to school wearing the white coverall pinafore. Argentines know its advantages: it protects the youngster's clothing, it makes the rich boy no better than the poor, and, since it must be clean and fresh every week, even the poorest working mother will have to launder it over the week-end.

From first grade Argentine children pay attention to grooming. They slick their hair back as their fathers and

elder brothers do. They take life more seriously and less boisterously than our small fry.

City school textbooks are quite good. Top authorities in history, geography, and other subjects are writing simple children's books, some with many pictures and cartoons. Incidentally such books are not only useful for the youngsters. Many a North American finds studying Argentine children's books is a simpler, more practical method of learning Spanish than taking a course from Berlitz.

Unfortunately, Argentines say, rural education is far behind urban education. Often rural schools are crowded, inadequate, one-room buildings. On many big *estancias* owners often pay for a schoolhouse which the province operates. The major subjects are history, arithmetic, and geography to which are added some elementary hygiene and physical culture. Free bus service has been provided in some remote areas with neither private nor public transport. One third of Argentina's farm homes are three or more miles from the nearest school.

In July, 1952, Governor Carlos Aloe of Buenos Aires Province discovered a "repulsive state of affairs." Argentine textbooks were shot through with excerpts from the works of Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, Browning, Grimm, Schiller, and Turgenev—all subversive influences in the peronista view. He formed a committee to revise all the province's textbooks. "The schools," he declared, "must teach the child the mysticism, the soul and the sentiment of Peronism."

Not to be outdone, the Minister of Education banned the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade readers published by Estrada. Congress lent a helping hand by making

Evita's *La Razon de Mi Vida* required reading in all schools.

Under the present government more and more teaching has been placed under federal control. Loyalty checks by federal political police are demanded of teachers and students alike. Primary, secondary, or higher school teachers whose allegiance to *peronismo* is the least open to question are quickly ousted. Pictures and slogans of Perón and Evita are hung in every school. Teachers are instructed to inspire their students to super-citizenship and the greatest reverence and respect for authority.

From infancy, Argentine children are now taught that their nation's history virtually begins with President Perón and that anyone disagreeing with his policies, ideas, and institutions is literally a traitor to Argentina and humanity. School children spend a good portion of their time parading in official demonstrations throwing flowers at the day's hero and waving small blue and white flags.

Religious teaching in the schools was introduced by the military government late in 1943. Parents may request that their children be excused from the religious classes, but in practice few do. Parents with any governmental connection would be suspected of disloyalty if they refused to let their children take religious instruction.

Many teachers opposed the introduction of religious classes, even though they personally had strong Catholic convictions. But religious instruction has been official for almost ten years, and it will certainly continue as long as the present government is in power.

The university, or *facultad*, where the Argentine gets his major formal education, has an importance and standing throughout Latin America far greater than we have

ever known here. The universities follow the European model. There are no campus life, fraternity houses, or week-end proms. A student may join a sports club like the C.U.B.A. (Club Universitario Buenos Aires) for *futbol* and rowing, but other extra-curricular activities of our schools simply do not exist. Students are predominantly male. They are generally older than our undergraduates in years and in outlook.

One famous Argentine doctor recalls a story of his fellow students' after-class activities. A group of them rented a small apartment for studious and amatory pursuits. They stole a taxi driver's meter and set it up outside the door. When a newcomer found the free flag down, he discreetly retired. If the flag was up, the apartment was his. The honor system called for payment in proportion to usage, but this was no problem. Said the doctor: "Since we Argentines love to boast of our virility, many of the boys frequently overpaid."

In the United States, the student usually takes a general course before proceeding to his specialized field. In Argentina, after he finishes his secondary education, he enters the university division which teaches the subject in which he is most interested.

Some students are from the upper-class families, whose names have long dominated the fields of law, government, and medicine. Others come from the middle class. Most of them represent the ambitious segment of every group of the population.

The Argentine who enters the university at eighteen is already able to vote. And since most enter two to three years later, they are strongly interested in politics. They feel it is their duty to participate actively in national life.

They believe they are part of the small percentage of the people who are destined someday to run the country, just as many Argentines feel that someday their country will run the rest of Latin America. All the political parties have cultivated students' support and counted on it to help in elections, demonstrations, coups, and reform movements.

To some young Argentines being a student is something of a profession, providing an opportunity to live off papa year after year, but the larger proportion work during the day, attending lectures as and when they can. That is one reason why they may go to the university for years.

Law students often get court posts to finance their studies. Similarly, medical students try for hospital orderly jobs, or positions in the Health Department or the Asistencia Publica, the municipally-operated first-aid service maintained in almost every Argentine community. Nepotism is frequent—good jobs often go to the young men with influence who don't need them.

Tuition is free at the national universities, but the student must pay for his books and his board if he lives away from home. Only graduates of secondary schools may enroll as regular university students, but others may attend classes as *oyentes* (auditors) without the right to take examinations or degrees.

Compulsory class attendance was abolished many years ago. Students who don't like a particular professor's politics or teaching methods are free to cut his classes. They can take their own time in deciding when they want to take their examinations. After completing the requirements, they get a degree.

Before Perón most Argentine professors were not full-time teachers. Often they were medical men, lawyers, or scientists who received nominal salaries for the hours they lectured and spent the rest of their time practicing medicine, writing, painting, or engaging in businesses. Many were senators and deputies. It used to be said that one of the surest ways to become Argentina's president was to get to be a college professor—this having applied to Perón's civilian predecessors, Roberto M. Ortiz, elected in 1937, and Ramon S. Castillo who took his place in 1940.

The fact that Argentine professors were, in the past, so often men of affairs sometimes helped students gain a broader viewpoint. Undergraduates had an opportunity to meet successful men in their chosen fields, though often they had little time to devote to students. Since the instructors did not depend on their positions for their livelihood, they were far more independent than either our professors or Argentine teachers in secondary schools. Again and again the Argentine government found it easier to dictate to secondary-school teachers than to university professors who were, and possibly still are, the center of opposition to the military regime.

In 1918 the students of Córdoba University got fed up with the rigorous discipline, incompetent professors, and backward teaching practices common to most Latin American universities. They demanded participation in the direction of school affairs and the selection of the administrators and professors. They wanted to free their schools from partisan politics. The students went on strike and eventually got what they wanted—representation in university councils and a voice in the appointment of professors.

The Córdoba incident spread throughout Argentina and all of Latin America. Chile was particularly affected. Strikes began and reforms followed as far away as Mexico. In the years following, all Argentine students won the right to form their own university governing bodies in conjunction with a majority of faculty members. They discussed and debated every local and international issue. To defy the authorities university students would stage a quick strike, boycott a professor, or march in the streets in mass demonstrations.

The majority of Argentine students have always been strongly pro-democratic. Because most of them were ambitious and filled with an individualistic spirit, they did not feel the appeal of Communism. But some of them became intense nationalists and leaders in the Alianza Nacional.

From the start Argentine students and their professors formed one of the most stubborn and valiant opposition groups to the military government. They neglected classes for political activity and staged numerous strikes and demonstrations. Their fervent disapproval led the government to "intervene" the universities and put their own officials in charge. More than a thousand professors, including some of the finest minds in Argentina, were dismissed or summarily pensioned off. Students who had taken part in strikes and demonstrations were expelled or kept from taking their examinations on one pretext or another. Even those who managed to take them found they never passed.

A good many leading personalities found it impossible to continue as teachers. One of the first to resign was Dr. Alfredo Palacios, rector of the University of La Plata, and

the grand old man of Argentine politics. A leading lawyer, statesman, and savant, Palacios was a dramatic figure on the Argentine scene. He dressed conspicuously, favoring a handlebar mustache, huge black sombrero, and long hair.

Dr. Bernardo A. Houssay, the second Argentine to receive a Nobel Prize, was forced to resign from the Physiology Department of the University of Buenos Aires at the age of fifty-nine, though the usual retirement age is sixty and that is not arbitrary. A doctor of sixty-two was called to fill a post in clinical surgery at the same university, but he, needless to say, was a peronista. When Houssay won the Nobel award some months after he retired, almost no attention was given to him in the Argentine press.

In December, 1947, the universities were theoretically returned to their own administrators, but Perón kept the right to appoint each university head. Directly or indirectly, the President appoints twenty of the twenty-five members of the directing committee of each university.

President Perón did establish full-time, adequately salaried teaching staffs. Formerly professors were grossly underpaid and frequently had to get outside jobs if they lacked private incomes. Families who once had to keep promising children out of school because they needed their earnings now receive government subsidies.

Naturally this applies only to those completely sympathetic to the regime. The government's weapon to keep rebellious students in line is its monopoly on higher education. To enter engineering, teaching, law, or medicine, a university degree is necessary and only a national university graduate can get one. To graduate he must receive

the government's political stamp of approval. Even to enroll in classes a student must have a "certificate of good conduct" from the Federal Police.

As in all Latin America, Argentine universities have concentrated on cultural and professional studies. They produced so many physicians and lawyers that many graduates could not find employment in these fields. At the same time, while the professions were overcrowded, there was a great shortage of technicians, industrial engineers, etc., especially when the government began to stress industrial advancement. Many businesses have petitioned for permission to bring in foreign experts, explaining: "We would like to employ Argentines for these jobs, but we simply cannot find anybody trained for them." American, British, French, and other firms have brought in many foreigners, while Argentine university graduates go jobless or take inferior positions.

In some fields—rubber, automotive, electrical—the Argentine who gets training abroad has no trouble finding a good post when he gets home. In other cases, especially medicine, the Argentine who goes abroad to study on his own initiative and gets a degree in the United States cannot practice unless he also gets a local degree. As a result, most Argentine doctors, dentists, and similar professionals complete their education in Argentina, get their licenses to practice, and then after a few years go to the United States for specialized training in such fields as cancer and heart disease.

Training in the United States has posed another problem. The Argentine government wants to allow only peronista representatives to go to the United States. If, for example, the American Embassy awards scholarships

through official sources, the recipient is likely to be a firm believer in Perón. On the other hand, if our Embassy makes its own choice, official Argentine sources are resentful.

Regardless of politics, however, most Argentines who come to the United States are enthusiastic about our country and anxious to learn American techniques and develop them at home. The more who come to see us at first hand, the better our mutual relations are certain to be, because, knowing each other, we come to be friends.

What the Argentines Read

OUTSIDE THE downtown Buenos Aires Boston Bank Building where the United States Embassy offices are located is a newsstand operated by an efficient and introspective custodian named José. José is no ordinary newsboy, whipping out papers for customers who are in a hurry. His stand, which covers a good portion of wall space adjacent to the bank's entrance, looks almost like the periodical room of a sizable library.

There are dailies in an amazing array of formats and languages. There are magazines in every category: sports, radio, movies, architecture, housing, the arts and sciences. There is even a sophisticated monthly intriguingly titled *Saber Vivir—Know How To Live*—a subject of no small appeal to Argentines. Customers often leaf through a few

magazines, oblivious to the heavy traffic on the Diagonal Norte close by, and then purchase their choice.

Argentines are among the greatest readers in Latin America or anywhere in the world. Reading at least two or three of the twenty-one daily newspapers published in their capital alone, or several of the two hundred magazines, is one of their principal sources of daily education.

Porteños are not only the greatest of Argentina's newspaper and periodical readers, but book buyers and readers too. Between four and six thousand titles are registered annually with the National Register of Intellectual Property which corresponds to our Bureau of Copyright. The Argentine capital boasts some of the world's finest book stores. These range from little second-hand shops to spectacular establishments like the *Ateneo* and *L'Amateur* in the center of town filled with floor after floor of publications in every language. There are several book shops like Mitchell's and Mackern's which feature books in English; others specialize in other languages. All during the day you will find them crowded, not just with students, but with business and professional men who drop in for a look around and a purchase, considering this one of the pleasures of a normal day.

The number of libraries in Argentina also reflects this interest in books. There are several hundred in the city of Buenos Aires alone. The National Library contains more than half a million volumes, the Congressional Library more than two hundred thousand, the Municipal Library of Buenos Aires the same number. All of the private cultural organizations and the various secondary, normal and university schools scattered throughout the capital and elsewhere have their own libraries. There

are a thousand more under the direction of the National Commission of Peoples Libraries which supervises the activities and contributes to the support of any library which meets the requirements of the law established by Sarmiento in 1870. The finest private club library in the world was said to have been that of the Jockey Club, which had sixty thousand books on law, Argentine history and literature. This library could be used by students who obtained special permission. They can no longer enjoy this privilege, however, for the library was recently destroyed by mob violence.

The nation was long noted for the independence and high quality of its leading newspapers, which were head and shoulders above other Latin dailies. Editors usually rated *La Prensa* and *La Nación* among the ten top newspapers in the world. However, Argentina's press has suffered greatly under Perón. His government made no attempt to suppress papers. It simply put them out of business by enforcing obscure sanitary and zoning laws, by giving their workers privileges which increased labor costs, and by restricting their newsprint supplies. Gradually peronistas bought control of some papers. By 1950, five of Buenos Aires' chief dailies (*La Razon*, *Critica*, *Noticias Graficas*, *El Mundo*, and *La Democracia*) were properties of the government-directed press trust, ALEA. Three others (*La Epoca*, *El Laborista*, *El Lider*) were owned by staunch peronistas. In 1951 the government expropriated *La Prensa*, and turned it over to the General Confederation of Labor.

Before the military regime came into power foreign news often received twice the space devoted to local affairs. *La Prensa's* major news pages carried long dis-

patches and often full texts of events which a majority of North American papers might cover in a few paragraphs. Local news was secondary, usually grouped in departments—agriculture, journalism, religion, etc. *La Nación* put only very exceptional developments on page one. Editors of both morning papers simply felt that nothing that occurred at home was half as important to Argentines as what happened abroad, and other dailies both in the capital and throughout the country followed their lead.

As a result, during its most flourishing days, *La Prensa* carried more foreign news than any other Latin-American daily. Yet, except in Paris, London, and for a time Washington, it had no correspondents of its own abroad: it used the services of the United Press and was the U. P.'s most important customer. The United Press considered *La Prensa's* patronage so lucrative that it kept a resident vice president in Buenos Aires just to make certain *La Prensa* got the best possible service.

La Prensa achieved its independence of the advertiser by building a tremendous volume of classified advertisements. These, in traditional London *Times* style, filled its first six to twelve pages. Starting in the first years of World War II, readers found a summary of the news in front page headlines; they had to look inside for fuller reports. All advertisements, incidentally, had to be paid for in cash in advance of publication. They produced such excellent results that *La Prensa* never had to solicit advertising.

The conservative *Prensa's* editorial policy never flamboyantly favored democracy—that was left to the less gentlemanly afternoon papers. Instead of attacking the

government's anti-press campaign outright, for instance, *La Prensa* might editorially praise Dean Carl W. Ackerman of Columbia University's School of Journalism for a speech on freedom of the press. In this it reflected Argentine temperament—and the Spanish habit of circumlocution to make a point.

As *New York Times* correspondent Milton Bracker put it, *La Prensa's* editorial technique was always to analyze by documentation, to concentrate on principles rather than personalities, to ask and deplore, not berate or insult. Perón was not *La Prensa's* first target. In its eighty-two-year history, it applied the same critical approach to virtually every one of his predecessors. It also faced threats from all of them. Perón's immediate predecessor, General Edelmiro Farrell, was the first to close it (for five days) because of a single story exposing inadequacies in a municipal hospital.

La Prensa was more than an outstanding newspaper; it was a national institution. It offered free medical and legal services to all. Besides the newspaper offices, the ornate gray headquarters on the Avenida de Mayo housed clinics, a hospital, operating rooms, a free music conservatory, a public library, an auditorium, a study center, a gymnasium, and consulting services for farmers, cattle breeders, and housewives.

Perón's war against *La Prensa* began with minor attacks. The daily was fined for disturbing the peace with the noise of its presses, for parking its trucks improperly, for sanitary violations. When the government seized control of all newsprint, including *La Prensa's* privately purchased supply, the paper had to apply for its share each day. Still *La Prensa's* editorials stuck to the argument

that Perón had violated the constitution, but it did not attack him personally. And Perón kept to the pretense of legality, finding tiny infractions of laws.

In January, 1951, the news vendors' union called a strike, making such extreme demands as a 20 per cent cut of *La Prensa's* classified advertising income, cancellation of all subscriptions, and closing of the branch offices where less than 400 of the paper's 485,000 copies were sold. The printers followed the vendors out on strike. The remaining employees who tried to get the paper out were forced out of the building. Publisher Alberto Gainza Paz was charged with endangering the security of the state. In March he escaped a jail sentence by fleeing to his mother's *estancia* in Uruguay.

A Congressional committee examined *La Prensa's* books minutely and decided the paper owed several million dollars for evading newsprint duties. Congress ordered its expropriation and Perón assigned it to the General Confederation of Labor.

On November 19, 1951, after a ten-month absence, *La Prensa* reappeared. Its twelve-page format was the same. The single difference was that the auction ads on the back page were all for real estate: the cattlemen who had previously used that page to sell as much as one hundred thousand head in one series of auctions had apparently forgotten *La Prensa* as a medium. The masthead listed the issue as "Volume 1, Number 1." The lead editorial reported that the paper had now "chosen the path of honesty," and a two-column story, wrapped around messages from and photographs of Perón and Evita, summarized the official version of how the paper came to die and was reborn as a worker's organ.

While protesting its promotion of good neighborliness, the new *La Prensa* openly featured slanted, bitter news stories and editorials. Most of the despatches come from Agencia Latina, another official news service which tries to cover South America. AL finds that almost every story gives an opportunity to present the United States as an imperialistic and dollar-hungry colonial power.

As a rule, *La Prensa* usually leaves AL's more colored stories to other papers. It likes to pose as the "serious section" of the peronista press. It features news of "Bolivia's gallant battle to win a fair tin price from American buyers," of Chile's "great need to nationalize its copper mines," and of Brazil's "determination to follow the Argentine example of refusing to send its sons to Korean battlefields."

The *Christian Science Monitor* reports that the broad "good neighbor" policy of the new *Prensa* is to deal with the other nations of South America as though they were "backward" or "underdeveloped" and to try to convince them Argentina can give them better help and guidance than any other country. First emphasis is, however, on Argentina's kind of nationalization.

"Other peronista dailies have their own special rules," the *Monitor* adds. "*Democracia*, for example, which is now six years old, concentrates its stories on '*justicalismo*,' the special brand of peronista social justice. It also has exclusives from the columnist Descartes, generally regarded as the pseudonym of President Perón. *Epoca*, the evening paper, has adhered to its role as the outspoken supporter on the home front of an isolationist foreign policy and a critic of attempted imperialism within Argentina's own borders. It is the organ of the extreme nationalists. The

majority of the remaining newspapers merely print what they are told."

By the end of 1951 it was almost impossible to find newsstand copies of *La Nación*, the only remaining big independent paper in Buenos Aires. Under government rationing of newsprint, it was forced to cut its press run by about half to some 125,000 copies a day. Those who secured copies loaned them to friends, and crowds of *porteños* read the issues posted in glass showcases in downtown offices. The shortage of exchange with which to buy newsprint cut all newspapers to six or eight pages and restricted circulation.

The dissipation of foreign exchange and soaring labor costs also made old and venerable book publishing houses despair. Argentine book publishing had received a tremendous impetus during the Spanish Civil War when many publishers with experience and excellent taste moved to Buenos Aires. More than one hundred publishing houses, not including universities and government institutions, published the best of the world's literature, technical encyclopedias, textbooks, etc., for readers at home and abroad. In 1944 an estimated seventeen million books were exported. Argentine books could be found even in Mexico, where the Spanish publishing business was almost as large as in Buenos Aires.

Spanish and Spanish-American writers like José Ortega y Gasset and Americo Castro sent their manuscripts to Buenos Aires to be published. The *Colección Austral*, a Spanish forerunner of English pocket-books, published 630 titles in 1947. The Club *El Libro del Mes* (Book-of-the-Month) was established to help the Argentine choose from the mass of literature before him: it selected one

outstanding Argentine book and one translation each month. There were no "book dividends," but club members could buy at a discount.

Most popular were melodramatic romances and inaccurate historical novels, but there was a growing vogue for mysteries. In 1950, Virginia Lee Warren reported the old favorites—Hemingway, Cronin, Maugham, Steinbeck, Caldwell, dos Passos, and Faulkner—were still much in demand, but George Orwell, Graham Greene, and Tennessee Williams were also popular. Among contemporary Argentine writers Eduardo Mallea is probably the best-selling author. He is best known in the United States for the translation of his novel, *La Bahía de Silencio*, *The Bay of Silence*.

But the cost of paper and printing materials has increased by 90 per cent in the last few years, and publishers are forced to operate on a day-to-day basis. They are also menaced by a law which allowed Perón to tax up to 50 per cent all income from foreign books, which included about 80 per cent of all those published, other than technical studies. Book-reading is still an upper- and middle-class pastime—except for the outstanding best-seller of 1951, Eva Perón's *La Razon de Mi Vida*.

There is little direct censorship of books, but publishers know better than to translate books which might be criticized. "The smart thing to do," one publisher confessed, "is to pretend that unfriendly works do not exist."

Spain is a subject to be treated gently, but other books which attempt to show up totalitarianism are acceptable, if they make no reference, direct or indirect, to Argentina. Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom* was a tremendous success.

How Argentines find time to read the mass of newspapers, magazines, and books offered them no one knows. New publications constantly appear. A favorite story in Buenos Aires declares that while it might not always be true that when two Greeks get together a new restaurant comes into being, it is certain that when two Argentines meet a new publication is definitely in the wind.

How Argentines Amuse Themselves

WHEN THE football championship games between Argentina and Uruguay were played, the excitement in Buenos Aires was so intense that newspapers brought out special editions.

Futbol—which is closer to soccer than our collegiate Saturday afternoon game—is Argentina's and Latin America's most popular sport. Scores of magazines in almost every Latin country publicize its professional stars, describing their home life and their activities with all the idolatrous details we customarily reserve for our Hollywood stars. Sports pages feature *futbol* news; radio stations put *futbol* scores before all else.

When the Argentine-Uruguayan championship was scheduled, the press was full of hands-across-the-border editorials, optimistically proclaiming how the se-

ries of games would help cement relationships between the two countries, bring about better understanding, and make for brotherly affection.

The championship contest ended disastrously. The umpire was accused of making an unfair decision. Fighting broke out, and in a few minutes the stadium was a shambles. There have been few international matches since.

Even in purely domestic championship matches, rivalry has reached such heights that guards search the spectators entering stadiums and politely confiscate any knives and revolvers until after the event.

Damage inflicted on an offending referee is not confined to profanity and libel. On more than one occasion officials have been hustled out of the stadium in ambulances because they were so badly hurt. At other times the ambulance, hastily summoned by the riot squad, was the only vehicle in which the umpire could escape.

Futbol is exclusively a masculine sport. No women play and few attend the matches which Sunday after Sunday brings crowds of up to one hundred thousand to Buenos Aires' River Plate, Hurican, and other stadiums. The turn-outs in secondary cities are only slightly smaller. Argentines play *futbol* in every town in the land, and every newspaper, except obscure political organs, carries full play-by-play accounts of the big games in Sunday afternoon and Monday morning extras.

The reasons why Argentines like their sports and amusements offer a clue to their character. If you want really to know a people, seek out what they do to enjoy themselves. Consider *futbol*.

Argentines love the game because of its unique drama

and the opportunity it gives them to witness personal heroism and individual improvisation. The top-rank *futbol* player must possess the abilities of a sprinter, a ballet dancer, and a juggler. He deftly catches the ball with foot or body, and he can kick it with either foot almost as far—and just as accurately—as our players throw a baseball. Argentines play the game with a unique brilliance not found elsewhere. Scientific teamwork patterns are intricately developed, yet the individual has the greatest opportunity to star.

Argentines take the utmost pride in winning international championships. At the Pan-American games held in Buenos Aires in February and March, 1951, the host nations swept up a triumphant total of 1,071½ points, to our second-place 734½. But for Argentine fans, it was hard to abide by the counsel of Evita (“sports and games teach us to be good losers”) and her husband (“Lose a hundred times but . . . make a hundred new friends”). The last big prize of the meet, the basketball championship, was one that Argentina dearly wanted, after winning the world amateur title in 1950. When the United States and Argentina met in the Pan-American championship final, 25,000 highly emotional spectators inside the arena and 5,000 who listened outside did what they could to help the home team’s cause.

Every time an Argentine took aim for a foul shot, the crowd was silent. Every American foul shot was made amid a screaming din. When the United States captured the title with a 57–51 victory, two hundred police immediately surrounded the Americans to get them safely off the court. Outside, where mounted cops were at work, a street was cleared for an American getaway.

Sportsmanship in the British or American tradition, while much talked about, is still a rather vague practice in Argentina. The handshake before the game, the outward sign of courtesy, even the terminology used in many sports, comes directly from the British. When the game gets really serious, however, such niceties are likely to be quickly forgotten.

Baseball and cricket have never caught on in Argentina. Polo, however, is a highly popular sport, witnessed by many thousands. The fleet-footed Argentine ponies have won international fame for their owner-players who, in lush days, thought nothing of taking a string of a dozen ponies on a trip up to Old Westbury, Long Island, just to compete in a few important games.

Horse racing is, next to *fútbol*, probably the Argentine's most popular sport. Argentina boasts about a dozen tracks, the two largest in Buenos Aires. The great Hipodromo Argentino, in Parque Palermo, oldest and most traditional, has races on Saturday afternoon; newer, even larger, San Isidro, the following day. At the height of the season, September–October, the races are great social events at which the smart set gathers. The Jockey Club manages both the racing and the pari-mutuel gambling. Large sums of money are bet there—you can start at two pesos—but Argentines do not wager away from the track.

While gambling is undoubtedly a major factor in the great enthusiasm for *fútbol* and horse racing, perhaps the reason it does not occur away from the events is that the Argentine has unlimited opportunities to gamble in other ways. The lottery goes on endlessly, both in the city of Buenos Aires and in the provinces. There are weekly

drawings with substantial prizes; there are other drawings during major holiday seasons.

Most Argentines try their luck on the lottery on a fairly regular basis, and tobacco shops everywhere display lottery tickets in their windows. Youngsters get the gambling habit early. An Argentine schoolboy won't spend his twenty *centavos* for a piece of candy; he will probably use it to play the wheel of fortune at the school gate. Because the lottery is so important in the Argentines' lives, they watch the way it is operated more closely than they watch any other government activity. They demand complete honesty. The government of former President Castillo was able to shrug off all kinds of official scandals, but when a fixed-number conspiracy was discovered in the Federal Lottery it proved disastrous.

The greatest gambling stakes, however, are wagered at the great summer resorts. Buenos Aires itself has no gambling casino, but Mar del Plata is only two hundred and fifty miles to the south—five hours by car, an hour by plane. The vast, many-storied casino at Mar del Plata is one of the few places an Argentine lady can visit unescorted in the evening, and generally she feels as safe as if she were in a government bank. In effect that is just where she is, for the Casino was built by the government of the Province of Buenos Aires with profits from previous less ornate casinos.

The Argentines' realistic assumption is that gambling is an ineradicable characteristic of the Argentine people. The government believes it is better to get the biggest share of the profits for its own social welfare programs and other purposes than to try to limit the urge to gamble.

The Church, incidentally, keeps mum on the subject, save for an occasional editorial in the daily *El Pueblo*.

Argentines crowd the gaming boards at Mar del Plata as we crowd Coney Island on a sunny Fourth of July. There are fifty-six roulette tables going full blast in season, far more than Monte Carlo ever had. To get to the Casino, you pass through a series of gardens manicured to the hilt, like everything else in Mar del Plata, and enter a vast red brick palace. Uniformed aides—the Casino requires 4,500 employees—are available to run errands, fetch drinks, and show you around. The place is so big a newcomer often requires a guide. The Casino not only has its own beach and luxury hotel, but swimming pools and Roman-style baths, underground parking spaces, a big night club, plus a group of sports arenas whose total capacity equals that of Madison Square Garden.

Its theater regularly imports full-scale opera companies and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. A big movie palace features Argentine productions and a few carefully-censored imported pictures.

Before and after gambling, you can attend a lecture on poetry, see an art exhibition, or look at jewelry shops, where winners can buy at least one pin or ring to keep their luck. There is even a place to park the baby, complete with puppet shows and sitters.

In the Casino's main public halls, decorated in quiet shades of gray and gold, are row after row of green baize-covered tables. Here you can start with *peso* chips and go up into the thousands. If you want to bid higher—and the sky is the limit—there are a series of other smaller rooms. Most elegant is the Mother of Pearl Salon. Even

before the current inflation it was customary for a dozen visitors to win or lose sums of \$25,000 and more. Baccarat and *chemin de fer* are played in these smaller rooms, which are favored by unescorted but highly respectable elderly and bejeweled ladies with large bankrolls.

Apparently there are no amateur gamblers among the Argentines. Most of them, especially the *porteños*, carefully work out their own systems before the season at Mar del Plata. When the infallible method goes wrong Mar del Plata's rocks may be the scene of a suicide as melodramatic as the lyrics of a tango. More numerous are the players who abandon their baggage at smart hotels, turn in their crack train or plane tickets, and take the bus back to Buenos Aires to plan furiously for another try at the earliest opportunity.

The formality and ceremony of Argentine amusement is well illustrated by the daily life at Mar del Plata in the mid-December through February season. The Duke of Windsor, in his Prince of Wales touring days, reportedly called Mar del Plata the only place where he felt inadequately outfitted. He declared: "Even the beachcombers wear white tie and tails." The Prince was exaggerating—but not much.

The beaches at Mar del Plata are set between rocky promontories. Each has its own social standing, customs, and unwritten rules of etiquette. Playa Popular is the least formal. A few of its bathers even dare to change to swim suits at home and bring along hampers filled with food for midday eating. Some carry little tins of canned heat to boil water for their *maté*. But it is obvious that this is not society.

The ultra-modern Argentines who have gone into hock

rather than miss the season would not dream of sunning themselves at any other place than Playa Grande. Here, even the location of your rented beach cabaña, replete with little wicker chairs, brass name-plate and dressing-room, is as much a symbol of acceptance as a listing in the *Social Register*. Placement, in fact, is in the hands of a director who has charge of the same protocol for the swank Opera Colon in Buenos Aires.

At the top of the list are the old families whose *estancias* provide their incomes. Even the diplomatic set has no special entree. One knowledgeable ambassador once remarked: "My cabaña locale is a better barometer of the true state of relations between the Foreign Office and my government than any Palacio San Martín spokesman. And with all the pressure in the world, I can't better it if *they* say no."

At Mar del Plata a fashionable Argentine goes to the beach at 11 A.M., never with less than two retainers to handle the offspring and accessories. He sits poised and unblinking on a chair or hammock, never on the sand, until 1 P.M., never later. The vendors on the Playa Grande who sell *empanadas*, little raisin-filled meat pies, and *alfajores*, sweet cakes, have signs identifying them as "The Duchess," "The Princess," or "The Queen." Prices reflect the degree of royalty. Among older Argentines, dodging a tan is as elaborate a process as acquiring one is for Miami and Asbury Park sun lovers. These Argentines consider persons with dark skins inferiors from lesser Latin-American countries, so they avoid the sun. For many years, society-conscious Mar del Plata authorities prohibited the building of stucco and tile houses. Everything, they insisted, had to be constructed of solid

red brick or massive brownish stone to ensure the dignity which characterizes the town today. Even movies with bullfights were banned, lest anybody think such things went on in Argentina.

The younger people in fashionable circles have in recent years become dissatisfied with this time-honored fustiness. Young Argentines buy as many lotions and creams as North Americans to cultivate assiduously enough tan to impress less fortunate stay-at-homes. They strip to outfits as brief as those worn by the Hollywood stars whose magazine photos set the mode.

Golf and tennis, a stroll on the Rambla, which is Mar del Plata's equivalent of our boardwalk, a stop for tea, are other events of seaside life. Everybody changes clothes at least half a dozen times a day. Since Mar del Plata's visitors generally come as family groups, uncles, cousins, aunts, and in-laws are likely to fill the same hotel or chalet. The men, who fuss even more than the women, rarely unbend to the extent of wearing the kind of sportswear we fancy. Even so, they make their *señoras*, who often as not are wearing mourning black, seem pale in comparison.

Vacationing Argentines are more likely to forget formality in the hills near Córdoba which are dotted with scores of hotels and cottages, or in the south, near Bariloche where a chain of beautiful lakes extends through to Chile. The Bariloche area, locale of the Nahuel Huapi National Park is popular both in summer for the superb scenery and mountain air and in the winter for skiing.

In summer those Argentines who cannot afford to go far away from the capital visit places like Tigre, a green-grown Venice twenty-one miles north of the capital on the

delta of the Paraná River. A favorite week-end spot, it is a yachting and rowing center. Dozens of clubs and restaurants provide easy, inexpensive pleasures. Even the poorest can row and build a little fire to roast meat and sausages.

Argentines are fond of clubs. The Club Gimnasia y Esgrima (Fencing), in Parque Palermo, some twenty-five minutes by subway and bus from downtown Buenos Aires, is said to be the world's largest. It has more than fifteen thousand members, who pay an extremely modest yearly fee for the use of swimming pools and fields for *fútbol*, hockey, tennis, basketball, and handball. Each week-end, *porteño* families jam the Club's three-story building, roam the landscaped grounds, dance on the terrace, and dine at lower prices than prevail in town restaurants. They also have the use of the Club's big downtown headquarters, equipped for swimming, bowling, basketball, handball, and fencing, plus its library, ballrooms and roof garden. Gimnasia y Esgrima was started by an Argentine lawyer who persuaded the municipal authorities to give him a portion of the unclaimed lottery prizes.

At the other social extreme from the popular Gimnasia y Esgrima is the Jockey Club of Buenos Aires. Its members are the *estancia* families and others of social prestige. Few outsiders ever crash its charmed circle, except for members of the diplomatic corps who almost automatically receive honorary memberships. That applies even to Perón who has not even been granted the customary deference accorded the President of the Republic.

The Jockey Club's elaborate headquarters were destroyed by a mob in April, 1953. It possessed an amazing library and a beautiful collection of paintings. Its wine

cellars were superb, its elaborate dining-rooms of regal magnificence, its Turkish baths like the dream of a Roman emperor.

The Club owns the race tracks at Palermo and San Isidro. It boasts two eighteen-hole golf courses, polo fields and many other properties. In those luxurious days before the Jockey Club was destroyed the profits made from these holdings enabled it to charge its members less for the use of its palatial home and its meals and other services than expensive hotels and restaurants.

Another unusual club, but with a large membership, is the Automobile Club. It operates a chain of tastefully decorated service and rest stations throughout the country. They service your car, give travel information, and sell gasoline at a slight discount. The Club's headquarters, located in the most exclusive part of Buenos Aires' residential district, are in a modernistic skyscraper topped by a huge restaurant with excellent food and a superb view of the entire capital. The Club fosters road-building, facilitates imports of visitors' and members' cars, and sponsors automobile races—another popular Argentine sport.

There are hundreds of other clubs throughout the area stretching north and south of Buenos Aires, and there are other clubs around every one of Argentina's smaller cities and towns. Almost every large commercial institution has its own club from the National Sanitary Works to the London Bank. So do nationality groups. Every school, university, department store, and shipping house has its own club.

Many believe that the overcrowding and monotony of the single rooms and smaller apartments where the lower

middle-class and poor Argentines live have been responsible for the growth of these clubs. But many of the first clubs were started by the British and the Hurlingham and Olivos are still considered among the smartest. For a time they limited the percentage of Argentines they would admit. This caused resentment which led to the formation of rival organizations. Today no such restrictions apply.

Some Argentines feel their numerous clubs contradict the frequently-repeated criticism that Argentines are unwilling to join together and cooperate in a mutual effort. Others believe the club in a sense represents an extension of the family. "When you are a member," we recall hearing one Argentine say, "you become part of a family with a strong sense of loyalty to those within the fold. Your club is opposed to all others."

An incident illustrates this. An American correspondent was invited to a foreign club on the banks of one of the Tigre canals, and asked a question about the club of another nationality group just over the high bush fence. "But I have never been over there," said the host, "even though I've been coming here to our own club for the last twenty-five years. We have our group and they have theirs."

It is in their clubs—and in their cafés and *confiterías*—that Argentines do most of their social drinking. But never does it equal the amount we drink. Most Argentines prefer wine and certain mild mixed drinks. Scotch is the most popular liquor, but because its price is high you rarely see an Argentine drinking it unless he is with foreigners or wishes to create an impression of affluence by ordering a "whiskey *con* soda."

Argentina's wines, which come mostly from Mendoza,

are first class and imported by nearby republics. At the clubs, the cafés, and the *confiterías* you see wine served at lunch or dinner. Children often get theirs with water or soda. Workers who cook steaks for lunch on the job usually bring along a good-sized bottle of red wine, which is so cheap that everyone can afford it. Poorer families generally buy their wine in large glass wicker-encased five and ten liter sizes.

Their most popular cocktail is the San Martín which is similar to our Martini. It is made of local vermouth and gin, usually of equal proportions, and often served before dinner. But just as many Argentines prefer vermouth with soda for sociability.

In most cafés the free lunch (plates of peanuts, sliced meats, biscuits, etc.) served with even the simplest drink is so abundant that a visitor often feels he has consumed an entire meal while supposedly developing an appetite for lunch or dinner. As in Paris, the law in Buenos Aires makes it a misdemeanor for a waiter who has served a patron to hover expectantly near him unless he is called.

Next to their clubs and the cafés, Argentines enjoy the movies most. Argentines prefer Hollywood films, their own movies, and Mexican pictures, in about that order. Italian and English films have also been popular. Spanish films have rarely done well.

Our films are popular, not only because of technical superiority, but because their plots have more action than others and are comparatively easy to follow despite the English dialogue. City-dwelling Argentines do not like our pictures with dubbed-in Spanish voices. They were tried for a time, but the *porteños* were so startled to hear Greer Garson and Clark Gable speak Spanish that they

sent up indignant howls. The Argentines' favorite movies are our big technicolor epics like *Blood and Sand* and *Gone with the Wind*.

Every American star and many secondary players are known to Argentine filmgoers. Local film magazines feature Hollywood articles about them as much as articles about Argentine stars. Even when American films were banned in order to conserve the dwindling dollar supply and to aid the local industry, Argentine fan publications continued to write about American stars.

A succession of ambassadors from the United States have fought to have the restrictions on our films lifted. Finally, in 1951, arrangements were made whereby the eight major United States film companies operating in Argentina were granted permission to remit a portion of their earnings.

Since the Argentines started making their own films, they have changed their minds about the significance of our pictures. Many an Argentine, though he considered himself reasonably sophisticated, once believed that our films fairly accurately reflected life in the United States. Now he sees that his own mystery thrillers, comedies, and tragedies are as remote from Argentine actuality as many of ours, and he realizes scenario writers are the same the hemisphere over. But it has not stopped him from wanting to go to the movies.

Now more and more Argentine movie fans like their own movies and are less likely to pooh-pooh them as second-rate imitations of Hollywood. Argentina produces about fifty to sixty features a year, plus a large number of shorts. Studios are located in and around Buenos Aires.

Argentine film makers do not deal with any theme that is likely to disturb the government. Since Evita Perón had been on the inside of Argentine film-making, first as an extra, then as a top featured actress (when she became Perón's favorite) she knew a good deal about the industry and kept a sharp eye on the film moguls to make sure her favorites were properly recognized. Opponents were controlled in many ways. Only the government can import film, and any producing firm which strays from the line finds its negative supply cut off. Actress Nini Marshall, who made the mistake of being too chummy with the opposition when Perón's fortunes were low, still finds no theater or film company will take her.

According to law, 40 per cent of all films shown in the nation's two thousand theaters must be local products. Until recently, there was no attempt to decree subject matter. But in 1952 Undersecretary of Information Raul Apold summoned producers to his office. What he told them was echoed the next day in a peronista daily: "We feel it timely to remind producers, directors, and writers of the film industry that it was not created to glorify the body of this or that actress . . . but to work intelligently to bring culture to all members of the national community."

Almost all movie theaters have reserved seats. Argentines are especially fond of the Sunday afternoon "vermouth" showing, which begins about 5:30. Often they buy tickets to it two or three weeks in advance. Saturday night and holiday evenings are, as everywhere, also highly popular.

Perhaps the best-liked American films of the last decade were the Andy Hardy series starring Mickey Rooney.

These gave a warm friendly picture of our family life. Andy's father for the first time convinced many an Argentine that North Americans were not quite as wild as depicted in some of our other films. The easy give-and-take of this screen family had a far stronger effect in selling Argentines on the United States than most of our war films.

It is an interesting commentary that despite all their propaganda efforts during World War II German and Italian films never made much progress with the Argentines. Only the postwar Italian pictures have been successful in Argentina. German films never caught on.

Few Argentine films are shown in the United States outside of the special Spanish-language theaters. This seriously annoys Argentine producers. At one time it caused the government to insist, unsuccessfully, that our films would be screened only to the extent that Argentine films were played in the United States.

Argentines are great theater-goers, but only Buenos Aires has a really thriving theater. Argentines usually have to wait until they go to the metropolis to see the latest productions.

Buenos Aires has twenty-eight legitimate theaters running in season. Many are centered on or around Corrientes, the Broadway of Buenos Aires. According to a compilation by *Variety*, the theatrical weekly, some 115 productions were put on during the first nine months of 1951. Twenty-four were translations of foreign dramas. Translators, by the way, often get the same billing as authors, and rate just as highly.

Argentine audience reaction is as unpredictable as ours. Successes are sometimes unexpected, as were *Our*

Town, and *Arsenic and Old Lace*, both of which had extensive runs. In 1951, *The Heiress* had a short run, while André Roussin's *Nina*, seen briefly on Broadway the same season, ran for 103 performances.

Argentina's theatrical world is not as tense nor as highly competitive as Broadway, probably because the returns cannot compare with what can be earned in the United States. Standards of presentation and staging admittedly do not equal ours, although they are far above those found elsewhere in Latin America. Most musicals are poor because the casts lack speed and polish.

For a long time one of the most popular musicals was at Buenos Aires' Maipo Theater which burlesqued current affairs and political developments. Today, poking fun at anything official is not permitted. The "disrespect" law actually makes it a criminal offense. To bring action a politician need only indicate that he is offended. Theatrical people who have dared oppose the government have in some cases actually had to exile themselves to find jobs.

The municipality of the Federal District of Buenos Aires rates movies and plays, judging some suitable "for families," others as "inconvenient for children." The theater or film house is subsequently expected to refuse to sell tickets—and deny admittance—to youngsters.

Argentines are great music patrons. Buenos Aires' Teatro Colón is one of the great opera houses of the world. Built in Greco-Roman style and proportioned in the grand manner, the magnificent plush, gold, and crystal house fills a complete city block. Since it was inaugurated in 1908, it has played a leading part in the city's life.

The French architect who designed the Colón was told to make it "bigger than the Paris Opera so we can show France that Buenos Aires is a real metropolis."

Seating 3,500, more than that of any other opera house in the Americas, including the Metropolitan, the Colón is used for opera, concerts, and recitals. Its revolving stages accommodate six hundred people. Argentines say the Colón surpasses both its Parisian model and the Vienna Opera House, and can only be compared to Milan's La Scala. There are eight balconies—the first four for evening dress.

Argentines like to recall that it was at the Colón that Arturo Toscanini began his rise to musical immortality when he was called from his violin to take the baton in 1910. The same red curtains have gone up on Caruso, Pavlova, Chaliapin, Lily Pons, Heifetz, and Rubinstein. On his trips to the Argentine Rubinstein plays a solid two-week season of ten concerts, afternoons and evenings.

An official school trains both chorus and ballet, but local voices for leading roles lag behind top standards for varied reasons. Some Argentines tell you it's the very lack of discipline or the unwillingness to submit to it that has prevented the development of first-rate artists.

The Colón has always been the prize showcase for Argentina's top society. Family boxes and memberships were always handed down from generation to generation. Wealthy Argentines made grand entrances and exits on such gala nights as the 25th of May and the 9th of July. The entire diplomatic corps and government officials also attended, as well as local politicians, would-be social leaders, and ordinary citizens who wished to shine in their reflected glory.

Though the Colón never made money, the capital and municipality of Buenos Aires always paid the deficit. When the military government took over, its leaders anticipated that families of wealth and position would snub the opening gala performance. So on the first big holiday all seats were called in and redistributed to important men in the Perón regime. They came to the gala in their most resplendent uniforms; their wives wore their most brilliant jewels, dresses, and furs. The tradition was maintained. They proved, to themselves at least, that they were fully as good as the socialites who had previously graced the Colón.

Aside from the Colón, there are many musical societies which sponsor concerts in Buenos Aires and secondary cities. The season begins in May and continues through the winter until September. The Asociación Wagneriana secures the most gifted singers. The Asociación Filarmonica Argentina sometimes gives its concerts in leading movie theaters, and at the Luna Park Boxing Arena when wrestlers and prize fighters have a night off.

Argentina's outstanding musical figure is the composer-conductor, Juan José Castro, who for many years conducted the Colón orchestra. He has conducted extensively in other American capitals, and he has composed symphonic poems, the Biblical Symphony for chorus and orchestra, chamber and ballet music, and various works for piano and violin.

Argentina's popular music reflects the national character. Almost every restaurant of any size has a small orchestra to play at dinner and even at lunch. Practically every *confitería* has live—not wired—music. Only a half dozen places have actually installed American-style juke

boxes. One of these is, of all places, in the subway at the Presidente Perón railroad station.

Many native Argentine orchestra players have assumed foreign names. Argentines have the notion that foreigners are better musicians than they are. At the Confitería Rex in Buenos Aires, one of the most popular places to drop in for a coffee or a snack, the orchestra is led by Istaban Weishaus. The mixed group of men and women musicians sit on a little balcony overlooking rows of tables and chairs and play furiously if sadly to cover the sound of endless conversation.

Argentina's inability to produce important music of its own has been a source of considerable distress. Many an Argentine will tell you his country's national anthem sounds like the overture to an Italian opera.

The music for which Argentina is best known is the tango. An Argentine once said the tango does not reflect Argentine life; Argentine life tries to reflect the tango. It was first heard in the last years of the nineteenth century, in a form very different from the tango of today. Some say it was at first a hybrid mixture of the Andalusian tango, the Cuban *habanera*, and the Argentine *milonga*. Others insist its elements are African, Brazilian, and cheap Italian.

John White points out that when the twentieth century dawned, no one would have dared play a tango in an Argentine ballroom because it was considered a rather shameful inheritance from the city-despised gaucho. It was spurned by respectable society. When the *nouveau riche* families began going to Paris to spend their money their sons introduced the tango to the French and it immediately became popular. Women found it exciting.

After becoming the rage in Paris, the tango became refined and it was perfectly proper for any young Argentine lady to dance it in public. Imported back from Europe it immediately replaced the waltz, the polka, and other old-fashioned dances—a striking example of Argentina's preference for anything that came from abroad rather than something produced at home.

However different their viewpoints on the tango's derivation, all authorities agree that though the form is now distinct, it is in no sense final. The tango, as the Argentines know it, continues its constant evolution, absorbing all sorts of elements. Though not as popular as in the past, it has now become a part of Argentine life. To a stranger all tangos sound alike. The rhythmic pattern hardly changes, yet new tangos are introduced week after week, while old ones are played and replayed again. It has a kind of monotonous charm and nostalgia in keeping with its origin.

In the smartest of Argentine night clubs the tango takes a secondary role to the imported fox trot. But go to a real Argentine spot and you find the tango playing endlessly. Even when the musicians occasionally switch to an American tune they play the double beat to the end of the phrase as if it were a tango. The contrast of Argentine music with that of other Latin-American countries is very distinct. Argentina's music is no more like the Mexican *miariachi* band than Dixieland jazz is like an old-time Strauss waltz. Nor is it like the Chilean *huaso* or the Cuban *mambo*. Argentines do not serenade their *señoritas* with tangos: it would hardly be appropriate.

Argentina's favorite tango singer is Carlos Gardel, who died many years ago. One radio station devotes an hour

of its day just to playing Cardel's recordings. His film revivals are invariably sellouts. His photo, seen in many a bar and café, shows a profile like that of Rudolph Valentino. Hugo del Carril, who has appeared in New York, is currently a favorite tango singer. Libertad Lamarque, another outstanding star, now sings her *Pampa Mia* outside Perónland only.

Even before Perón decreed that half of all musical programs must consist of Argentine music, the tango was the predominant rhythm heard on the radio. But more and more serious music from the United States is broadcast in recorded concerts.

Before World War II the favored recorded orchestras were the Berlin, London, and Vienna State Symphony. Many Argentines felt that the only good music came from Europe. But today they hear the orchestras of Stokowski, Toscanini, the Boston Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, and many others. This has convinced many that we are not complete barbarians. If we can play good music so well we cannot be such an uncultured people after all. Our jazz rather contradicts this opinion, but most Argentines feel jazz is primarily for the younger generation. The youngsters love it and they talk knowingly of Tommy Dorsey, Xavier Cugat, and other popular North American musical figures.

Television came to Buenos Aires just in time to help peronistas campaign for the November 11, 1951, Presidential elections. The first program was devoted to the "sacrificial" gesture of Evita in renouncing the Vice Presidential candidacy; it was telecast on October 17, the sixth anniversary of the day the *descamisados* returned Perón to power. The official announcement that Argentine video

would be "the best in the world, far clearer than that in the United States, because of the competence of Argentine technicians," undoubtedly puzzled American firms. The sole transmitter, studio equipment, and receivers were all made in the United States, and American technicians helped install them.

Radio Belgrano promised to televise all the big *futbol* games, auto races, horse races, and other spectacles, but for a long time every home would continue to be dominated by the radio, blaring away all day with the music of a tango.

Meat and Wheat Make Argentina

ONCE ANNUALLY each ambassador in Argentina gets out his top hat, has his striped trousers pressed to razor sharpness, and sets forth with his aides for the biggest social event of the year. It is not a state dinner or the opening of the Opera Colón. It is the cattle show.

As you approach Parque Palermo in the smart northern section of Buenos Aires, you find all traffic headed in the same direction. Everyone is going, from the President of the Republic and his ministers to the factory worker and the *peon*. No one wants to miss the opening of the Sociedad Rural exhibition.

This is the one time of the year when the Argentine *estanciero* feels he comes into his own. He may be denounced, as he frequently is, as the "decadent representative of the *oligarquía*, who has bled the country of its

money so that he can waste it in Paris." However, when he displays his Blue Ribbon winner, the *estanciero* knows that he and his products have been responsible for Argentina's wealth and greatest fame.

The attention lavished on one of the Shorthorn or Aberdeen Angus champions provides a clue to the Argentine sense of values. A champion bull listed in the Breeder's Book, bred and crossbred in the endless quest for perfection, will be accorded more care than a Hollywood star. He gets his baths and treatments of olive oil. His long curly coat is brushed, and the thick hair above his eyes is specially arranged. His short, perfectly-formed horns are polished, his hoofs carefully manicured.

Many champions are not even grazed on the grassland. Instead, they are confined to small pens, provided with cows to give them milk, then brought to the big barn and installed in private quarters for feeding, grooming, and watering in special luxury. Skilled veterinarians watch them constantly. They are fed bland mash dashed with molasses. Everything possible is done to produce the kind of animal whose progeny will also be meat-bearing champions.

The members of the Sociedad Rural—an organization founded in 1866 and, Argentines will tell you, outranked only by the Catholic Church—long influenced legislation, political power, and to a lesser degree public opinion. They knew that as members of the most exclusive and important farmers' association in the Americas, they were responsible for developing Argentina's cattle economy. They imported the first shorthorns, started the cattle shows, introduced the experimentation which advanced the breeds. They brought into one solidly-organized

group men with such wealth and power that they themselves could not fully understand their responsibilities and privileges.

At first Argentina's *estancias* were rough, sometimes primitive places where cattle were raised for hides and tallow. Some meat was salted and shipped overseas. Five steps paved the way for the *estancia* of today.

First, the invention of barbed wire, which enabled the *estancieros* to divide off their grazing areas and keep their animals from straying or being rustled away.

Second, the arrival of immigrants who came to work on the land, providing a vast source of low-cost labor.

Third, the railroads, built by foreign capital to carry the products of the *estancia* to deep-water ports for shipment overseas.

Fourth, refrigeration. Developed first by the French, then by the British, it enabled the Argentines to halt overseas shipment of salt meat or live cattle and freeze meat for shipment overseas to arrive in the most perfect state.

Fifth, improvement of breeds. Many Argentine *estancia* owners were little interested in the quality of their cattle. But when they saw how their own Merino sheep, averaging only thirty-nine pounds, brought two and three pesos a pound in the London market while British Lincolns far outweighed and outsold them, Argentines got interested and began importing. "Pedigree," a word the British introduced, is now an accepted Argentine term.

With improvement of the breed came an increasing interest in the quality and nature of Argentine grasses to fatten the cattle. Some *estancia* owners refused to break their rich sod, feeling the plow somehow befouled their

pasture. But members of the Sociedad Rural experimented with fields of alfalfa, which often thrived seven or eight years without replanting. Others grew clover, barley, and foxtail to replace the wild grasses.

Nature's contribution, however, was the greatest. The *estancieros'* herds never needed indoor feeding because, in most cases, they could graze all year round. There were, of course, winters when loads of hay had to be brought in and grain was buried in silos for droughts. Occasionally there were locust and grasshopper plagues, and sometimes hailstorms. Generally however, until the last few years, weather has been almost uniformly kind.

The *estancieros* developed a system whereby they did not feed their cattle on corn, as we do in the United States, but rather bred them on one *estancia*, fed and fattened them on another, and then sent them off to market in the size that would fetch the best price. Generally, this was around 800 pounds, compared to our customary 1,100. Argentines prefer beef from young cattle, explaining it is more tender. The small steer gets a very substantial premium per pound over the larger one.

Since 1883, when the first British refrigerating plant was opened in Argentina, big foreign meat-packing plants have dominated the slaughtering and shipment. Some years ago some of the smaller *estancieros* felt that these concerns were a monopoly which established quotas and fixed prices so as to give only certain influential *estancieros* and themselves the highest profits. The Confederation of Rural Societies, made up mostly of farm-dwelling *estancieros* who often criticized the older and better established Sociedad Rural as a group of absentee owners, helped establish the Argentine Corporation of Meat Pro-

ducers (C.A.P.) in which they insured their own prices and which in a sense served as an extension of their *estancias*.

When the Perón regime came into power, C.A.P. was linked with the government. As politics and economics became more closely meshed than in almost any other country, Argentina began to face difficulties and actually experience meat shortages, something which previously would have been considered impossible.

At the end of 1951 Argentina was estimated to have about forty-three million cattle, well below the forty-five million head estimated for 1949. And it appeared likely that Argentina would not be able to supply both the British market and her own. *Estancieros*—and everybody else in Argentina—had plenty of explanations of what had happened. The most likely explanation lies in a combination of several points.

For much of their country's economic trouble, the government is entirely responsible. Conception of a new and greater Argentina which could make its own machines as well as grow its own food made it embark on a program of industrialization at the expense of agriculture. The Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Exchange was established to handle all exports. I.A.P.I. paid farmers and stockmen low prices for their products and sold them abroad for high prices, using the profits to build up industry. Seeing their own profits decline, the farmers balked, cut down their production, and kept their cattle from the markets. In 1951, for instance, Argentine farmers on a sit-down strike planted less than twelve million acres of wheat as compared with seventeen million in 1943. In February, 1952, cattlemen were offered 21 per cent more

for cattle on the hoof in an effort to get more beef off the *pampa*.

Argentines were eating more themselves. Before the war they ate about 60 per cent of the nation's produce; now they consume more than 80 per cent. In 1950 the per capita meat consumption in Argentina was the world's highest—247 pounds per year. Australia and New Zealand were next highest at 147, the United States was fourth. Meat is the favorite Argentine food because it has always been tasty, cheap, and abundant, especially as compared with such foods as eggs, fish, and vegetables. Even in 1952 a pound of onions cost as much as a medium cut of meat. "If you only have so much to spend," one Argentine queried, "which dish would you choose?" The nation's health authorities have worried about the carnivorous tastes of Argentines for years, but not until recently did Perón begin urging his countrymen to eat more vegetables and less meat.

The 1952 economic crisis was due partly to the weather. For two years severe droughts parched the *pampas*. Land once rich with corn, wheat, and cattle cracked and blew away in clouds of dust. Droughts also depleted herds and lengthened fattening time.

Perón's industrialization program lured workers from farm to city. His labor laws made *estancia* management as intricate as running a factory. Both large and small landowners complained that figuring their workers' overtime, days off, hours worked, etc., took so much time they had little opportunity to see to cattle and crops. They complained even more about the extra pay they were forced to give *peons*.

Mechanization on the farm did not keep pace with

mechanization in the city. In fact, since 1941, Argentines themselves point out, the country had not made much agricultural mechanization progress, having only one tractor for each 1,863 acres. In 1951, I.A.P.I. offered credit for machinery purchases, but there was little machinery to be had.

Estancia-owners also feared the government's effort to break up their estates would mean cattle-raising in the Argentine manner would cease, for, they pointed out, on their large estates cattle are grazed by moving them from field to field, something impossible in a limited area.

The government's answer was that breaking up the estates would probably do little harm. It pointed out that this free movement of cattle had encouraged the foot-and-mouth disease, a subject, incidentally, which is worth a brief note since it has long been a highly disputed point between the United States and Argentina.

Aftosa, foot-and-mouth disease, first appeared among Argentine cattle in 1870. Though seldom fatal, it causes painful sores on animals' mouths and hoofs. Because the cattle are unable to walk far or eat much, they become scrawny and unmarketable. In Argentina the disease occurs in a mild form, and it is not considered as seriously as in the United States or in Britain, where it is endemic.

Aftosa does not affect humans, but because the virus spreads so rapidly and is so hard to stamp out, the United States refused, in 1927, to allow imports of meat from *aftosa*-infected areas. Then an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in southern California in 1929 was traced to trimmings of fresh meat brought by a ship from Buenos Aires. The following year, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act

extended the ban to cover meat from all parts of Argentina.

Argentines refuse to understand it is primarily a medical problem, and have considered it almost entirely a political and economic issue. They feel that the embargo was a protectionist measure, and should be lifted.

To ease the situation, the State Department tried to conclude a sanitary agreement with Argentina to permit importation of meat from non-infected areas, but the Senate refused to ratify it. Some Americans felt that if the Argentines had a chance at our market they might take more forceful methods to prevent *aftosa*. Currently, since Argentina no longer has a surplus of beef to export, the question is academic.

By 1952 the once great breadbasket and meat market of the world was obviously in short supply. Argentina had the greatest trade deficit in her history and the export outlook for the future looked grim. No wheat at all was expected to be available for foreign trade. Prospects for rye, barley, and oats were little better. The only pastoral product of which Argentina had a surplus was wool, and despite lower price offers, there were few takers.

To save enough meat to fulfill the British beef contract, President Perón proclaimed Argentina's first meatless day on February 1. The Plaza Hotel in Buenos Aires offered *bacalao vizcainay*, codfish in rich Spanish sauce, instead of its regular Châteaubriand. Restaurant La Cabaña, home of "baby beef," featured chicken pie in place of the succulent mixed grill. One meatless day a week was a shock to most Argentines.

Another shock was the "inflexible austerity" program President Perón announced later in February. He de-

creed a second meatless day per week and ordered slaughterhouses to close one day and slaughter only for export a second day each week. He curtailed immigration, except for agricultural workers and a few skilled technicians, and announced that government expenditures would be kept to a minimum. He appealed to the nation to save food, pleading that it was the first time in five years he had asked any sacrifice. The President called for a 20 per cent increase in production, and said that with it, the national problems of inflation and lack of foreign exchange would be solved. And he promised that farmers would receive 33 per cent more for their crops.

In May his promise that all of the nation's resources would be used to counteract the devastating drought and other factors which had diminished agricultural production was put into action: some eight thousand troops were ordered into the fields to help harvest the corn crop. Perón had also promised to double agricultural production by irrigating 2,500,000 acres of arid land and by stimulating production by mechanization and other means.

By then the rich black earth of the River Plate area showed signs of returning to its customary life and wealth. But unless the President could make the farmers more enthusiastic supporters, Argentina's agricultural problems could not fully be solved.

Industries of Argentina

STEP INTO a car outside the entrance to the United States Embassy offices on the Diagonal Norte in Buenos Aires. Tell your chauffeur to skirt the Plaza de Mayo and head southward along the Paseo Colon. Within a half-hour's drive, you will get a synthesized view of Argentina's commerce and industry—the two things which so many Argentines hope will change their country from what they consider a colonial economy to a modern, independent leader of Latin America.

Along busy Leandro Alem are arcaded office buildings and some of the great warehouses of the biggest importing firms—Singer Sewing Machine, duPont and Duperial, Peabody. Here are the old foreign companies who have long imported the goods made in Detroit and Liverpool, Zurich and Rotterdam. Since their country's birth, Argen-

tines have imported the manufactured products from the world's industrial centers.

A mile or two south, and along the oily stream of the Rio Riachuelo, heralded by an odor which at times hangs over the entire area like a dense cloud, are the big *frigoríficos*: Swift, Armour, Anglo, and Wilson. Argentines know them well, for to these slaughterhouses and meat-packing establishments have come the cattle from their *estancias*—large and small—to be processed for use at home and for shipment to the markets of the world.

It was from the sale of her meat plus her wheat and agricultural products, her mutton and wool, her quebracho and hides, that Argentines got the foreign exchange to buy their Fords and Frigidaires, the flannels and the furnishings for their everyday use, comfort, and luxury.

But continue your southward journey beyond the limits of Buenos Aires toward the provincial capital of La Plata where the rich *pampa* comes up almost to the edge of town. Here, rising on the flat, grassy land, you see the full turn of the cycle: new plants and warehouses, many of glass-brick with sharp, clean lines and towering chimneys. "All this," Argentines tell you proudly, "has come in only a few years. These factories are making products which will someday free us from our economic subjugation of the past."

The drone of spinning factory wheels often floats over the herds of grazing cattle. Some of the factories here on the road to La Plata, elsewhere in Buenos Aires and in some of the other cities, still bear names which indicate either foreign establishment, partnership, or the use of rights, patents, and trademarks. Yet to many Argentines

this is unimportant. Even if raw materials are agricultural rather than mineral, or if, as in many cases, they have to be imported from abroad, the factories prove to the Argentines that their country is coming of age industrially.

"Today," one man tells you, "more than half our country's national income comes from industrial sources. Is not that evidence of what we have accomplished?" The answer you gather is yes—for to deny it or to cite contradictory facts is considered the worst possible taste by many Argentines.

"*Industrializacion*" is a word Argentines love to use. Workers throw it into their conversations. Up-and-coming businessmen and professionals, reading more and more technical journals, use it with familiar intimacy. Classes on the exact sciences boom. Even the *estancieros* whose interests have always been in their short-horned cattle or Aberdeen Angus, and who opposed the mill and factory, now talk knowingly of percentages, increasing production, rise in consumer goods, hard and soft lines, and replacement markets.

Argentines, like many other Latin Americans, feel that only through industrialization can they gain their independence and raise their living standards.

The most important manufacturing fields today are meat-packing, machinery and vehicles, metal goods, and flour and milling. Contrary to general opinion, the lack of available coal and iron has not dampened the industrial spirit, though it has hampered development of heavy industry.

Though many Argentine *estancieros* fear the industrialization which is held out so brightly as a new way of life to Argentines, we feel that some of the more alert land-

owners are going into the manufacturing business. Some of them think it is just good sense. They sometimes get special tax advantages if they set up certain essential operations. Moreover, the *estancieros* have capital to invest and know that much of Argentina's industrialization must use agricultural products, hence is eventually bound to benefit them.

For a long time wealthy Argentines preferred to use profits to add to their already extensive land holdings. They improved the breed of their animals and the methods of cultivating their herds. Other funds were invested abroad and used for travel and luxury living. With certain exceptions, which will be noted later, comparatively few of them were interested in the early days in re-investing in industry in their own country.

Since Argentina presented almost unlimited opportunities, foreigners were eager to provide funds to construct utilities, transport, meat packing plants, import and export businesses. Foreigners first began to develop Argentina's textile mills and other light manufacturing. Until the late 30's most foreign companies operating in Argentina made little pretense of being Argentine. In the United States, Shell has always hidden its foreign ownership. Firms operating in Argentina, however, spelled their names in their own languages. An Argentine who went into a Belgian utility would find most of the officials, and often the lesser employes, Belgian. The same thing was true in perhaps even greater measure in British-owned railroads.

Foreign owners sometimes said they needed their own nationals in positions of trust. Occasionally they would privately explain they felt Argentines were "lazy" or "in-

different." Although many an Argentine performed the work of a foreigner with the same efficiency, he received lower salary and rank. United States firms, more often than the British, gave their employees special living allowances enabling them to rent better houses, dress more smartly, and own a car or two which they could import more cheaply from home.

In many cases, dollar salaries were not large by the standards at home. However, translated into *pesos* and measured against the generally lower Argentine living costs, they gave the *Yanqui* a better house or apartment, more servants (who were generally overpaid by Argentine standards), and a much greater opportunity to enjoy life. Moreover, the relatively few years most North American officials spent in Argentina before moving on made Argentines feel that all of them were unstable, temporary visitors.

Often those young Argentines who were denied equality, or others who felt slighted in their dealings with foreign firms, became the most active members of Argentina's nationalist organizations, and launched the bitterest attacks against the United States and Great Britain.

"You only came here to get as much money as you can and then go home," many said. "You have no intention of making your career in Argentina."

The military government's nationalization program has, in recent years, changed this feeling. By law, foreign companies are now required to limit the number of their nationals to a small percentage of the total employed. Usually these are persons in key executive posts—accountants, operating vice presidents, etc. Formerly, many British, French, Dutch and other foreign employees ac-

quired Argentine citizenship as an expedient to cover them until they eventually returned home. Now officials check with great care.

Rare is the man who gives up United States citizenship even though planning to stay in Argentina permanently. People of other nationalities, however, who first came on a brief assignment, have become Argentine citizens.

Foreign investors were attracted to Argentina in large measure for two reasons. First, the country offered great opportunities for development and growth. Second, until not long ago there were few restrictions or even binding regulations.

Before 1932, for example, no one in Argentina paid an income tax. The Argentine businessman with a successful company might earn from 30 to 50 per cent profit a year. Branch offices in Argentina could send home almost unlimited remittances.

Until 1935, foreign banks had a leading role in Argentine commercial operations. In that year the Banco Central de la Republica, in a move that foreshadowed many subsequent nationalist steps, took over all banking control functions from other governmental agencies. National and foreign banks were able to buy stock in the new agency. But it was non-negotiable without Central's consent and the influence of each stockholding bank was limited.

A group of young, previously untried Argentine financiers brilliantly built up operations during this time and helped speed development of local business and industry. When the military government took over in 1943, most of them were forced out. Some resigned directly; some just read about their "resignations" in the papers. The

pace of financial nationalization was further stepped up in 1946. Today the Central Bank completely controls the entire banking system. All individual bank deposits are held for its accounts. It fixes loan policies, operates parts of the government's stake in the insurance business, runs the stock exchange and other major financial activities.

Yet despite this Argentinization, the average citizen probably has some money on deposit in a foreign bank. Thousands of Argentines in Buenos Aires and in other cities where it has branches deal with the First National Bank of Boston, largest United States branch bank in the Argentine. Thousands of others keep accounts in the National City Bank of New York, the London Bank, the Royal Bank of Canada, and with French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and even Syrian banks. In the United States many foreign banks also have branches or representatives, but they usually stick close to Wall Street, and do little business with the average American. Though foreign banks in Argentina have lost much of their prestige, Argentines still do business with them on a day-to-day basis, and find that their way of operation has influenced—and continues to influence—their daily life and outlook.

The situation was similar with Argentina's railroads, until their recent nationalization. The British owned and operated at least three-fourths of the country's railroad mileage. The French owned one road. The rest, chiefly in areas where private foreign companies did not care to invest, were Argentine.

The British, in effect, divided the territory between southern, western, and northern lines. The railroads dominated transport and the owners developed political

influence to retain their hold. Most Argentines believe that railroad representatives helped put through the Mitre law which gave them the right to import goods for their own needs duty free. It provided liberal tax exemptions and permitted the roads to pay only 3 per cent of their net annual receipts. Net annual profits were officially limited to 6.8 per cent of the invested amounts averaged on a three-year basis.

Everything was done to keep official earnings within the legal limit. The railroads set up their own British subsidiary construction companies whose charges siphoned off the profits. Sometimes they paid with special bonds whose high interest and amortization had to be met before profits could be acknowledged. Or they issued vast blocs of stock against established values.

Moreover, though the railroads always denied it, if they took the trouble to answer at all, many Argentines gradually came to feel that rail executives did everything possible to hamper construction of highways because they did not want competition from trucks and trailers. Over the railroads' opposition a special gasoline tax for road building was passed in 1932. Argentina's roads are still poor for a country so advanced in other ways.

Argentines gradually learned these facts, although they were little publicized. During World War II Argentines urged nationalization, which was finally achieved under President Perón.

At the beginning of the war, British investments in Argentina totalled about two billion dollars. Much of this was held by independent firms whose London home offices often existed primarily to handle stocks listed on the London Exchange. Stocks and bonds in firms operat-

ing in Argentina were bought and sold by Britons and others who knew little of the country except what they read in an occasional dispatch, an annual report, or perhaps such financial publications as the *Review of the River Plate*. In the early forties the British had to liquidate many of their foreign holdings to pay for arms and to purchase goods in other world markets, and their investments began dropping drastically.

When the Argentine government decided to expropriate the railroads, local managers and home offices protested. Just what a fair price for the properties would be of course depended on one's viewpoint. The British complained that investors many of whom were poor widows and orphans who had invested in the shares were being defrauded by expropriation prices which they hardly considered equal to the true value of the property. A barter was finally made for meat, wheat, and other cereals which seemed reasonably fair to both sides.

President Perón in February, 1952, told how many of the deals for foreign investments had been completed: "When we purchased the railroads, they asked eight billion *pesos* (\$568 million at the then-current rate of exchange). We didn't pay that amount, and we didn't pay with money—we paid with wheat. We issued currency in an amount corresponding to the wheat we purchased from the farmers at twenty *pesos*, and they were satisfied because they used to get six. We sold to the British at sixty."

He said the deal also gave Argentina 23,000 properties that were not railroad facilities. He added that these had been sold by the government producing enough to pay back the original issue of currency. "In this way the rail-

roads did not cost us a single penny," he declared. "We purchased telephone networks and gas utilities in the same manner."

Today the railroads are obviously not as well run as before. During the war and the long period of purchase negotiations, no new trains, locomotives, or other equipment were put in and both rails and rolling stock wore out. The Perón regime has not reinvested its money in new equipment. Trains are often brightly repainted to make them look slick and streamlined but this does not fool anyone very long—especially if one rides them.

The trolley systems, also purchased from the British, were in the same condition. Some new Mack trolley busses have appeared in Buenos Aires. But the town's ancient tram cars are still jammed beyond belief during rush hours. Scores of men hang on to the rear platforms, held, *porteños* say, only by hope and charity.

To the surprise of many visitors to Argentina, the nation's most vital industry, the big meat-packing plants, was also long dominated by Britons and North Americans. It often suited the interest of the *estancia* owners to go along with this arrangement. For one thing, they were not interested in the physically dirty business of slaughtering their steers, dividing them up into the appropriate parts, and then carrying on the highly diverse job of overseas shipping and distribution. Also, the big packing plants worked closely with influential families.

Most of the large packers were United States concerns, Swift, Wilson, and Armour among others. They were operated profitably for many years by very high-grade executives from the United States. However, they became victims of an economic squeeze play that was almost of

deadly proportions. They were told the price to pay for cattle; they were allowed no control over their labor either as regards wages, hours, or the number of employees to be retained on their payrolls. In addition they were told at what price to sell their finished product. The consequence was that profits disappeared and deficits resulted. After months of negotiation, while I was ambassador, the government finally agreed to take up the losses and pay them 6 per cent on their capital investment. This was, of course, unsound as a permanent solution but was helpful as a temporary expedient.

The Argentines have very little experience with investments in corporate securities. They have a somewhat distorted idea of capitalism, especially the foreign variety. To most of them, a capitalist was often a well-fed foreigner unable to speak Spanish who had designs on Argentine land, cattle, or possessions. Capital was rarely visualized as a tool for production. "Capitalist" was hardly ever used in an approving sense. Perón's own dim view of capitalism and the anti-capitalist notions stressed by his party reflect this.

Because foreigner investors often sought to get their investments out quickly and were unwilling to stay for a long-term pull, many Argentines who did go into capitalistic operations decided in true Argentine fashion to go him one or two better. Profits were rarely limited by any concept of public responsibility. No anti-trust laws prevented competition-killing price agreements. Profits, as noted, ran as high as 50 per cent—and even if paid in full the taxes were small.

When the military government came into power, it quickly put the nationalization effort into high gear. The

railways were among the first to become 100 per cent Argentine. A national Merchant Marine, established by President Castillo in 1940, was expanded. One British-Argentine newspaper ran slighting editorials about "the gaucho at the wheel," but Argentines made their original hodge-podge of ships into a thriving operation.

In May, 1949, the Argentine State Line, with great cheering from the press, formally acquired the vast Doderro transportation empire which held virtual monopoly of Rio de la Plata shipping, sent liners and freighters all over the world, and owned several airlines. In 1951 it became Latin America's new tonnage leader. Argentines boasted theirs were the only Latin-American passenger liners with regular services. Three new 116-passenger ships maintained a regular schedule between New York and Buenos Aires in direct competition with long-established United States lines and drew record crowds of well-wishers every time they arrived and left port.

After Perón bought Argentina's telephone system from the Americans, one of his first steps was to cut rates, low as they were. The idea was apparently to prove that the United States, via International Telephone & Telegraph, had been overcharging. The nationalists, of course, applauded—overlooking the fact that the quality of service soon began deteriorating despite the fact that the I.T.&T. retained a long-term management consultant and supplier contract. Before long rates began to climb too. To Argentines the most shocking thing was that drugstores, tobacconists, and other shops in Argentina which had offered customers free telephones for as long as anyone could remember had to put in pay telephones.

This time, however, Argentines were reminded that it

was all for the good of the country. Many Argentines complain the system does not work as well as formerly. Others say: "We are making mistakes, but we are learning. And it is ours."

Perón did not have to expropriate the oil business, since the state-owned Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales (YPF) had been established many years before. The government did permit foreign companies to produce, import, refine, and market gasoline. But in 1952, Ultramar, a small petroleum refining and distributing agency jointly owned by the Texas Company and the Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, sold out to the government. It had long been chafing under the handicaps and headaches involved in operating in Argentina. Balancing its difficulties against the small portion of profits it was allowed to convert into dollars, it decided to give up. The new *La Prensa* caroled: "Capitalist propaganda gives a false impression that industry loses value when it is in the hands of the state. The view of the Argentine government is different, and, of course, accurate. Its concepts are borne out in its nationalization policy, which now wisely and patriotically adds Ultramar to its holdings."

About the same time, Armour Laboratories, a subsidiary of Armour & Company of Chicago, announced it had reached an agreement with Argentina for setting up a pharmaceutical plant to produce insulin and two other medicines derived from the glands of cattle. This represented the first major investment of foreign capital in Argentina since Perón's early days. Permission to build was granted through a government decree that will apply to any foreign drug company wishing to come to Argentina to tap its vast cattle resources. From the hundreds of

thousands of cattle slaughtered in Argentina annually, the plant will get the pancreas and pituitary gland for insulin, ACTH, and trypsin. The agreement permits export of an estimated 70 per cent of production left over after Argentine needs are filled.

The biggest United States plants in Argentina today are Ford, General Motors and Chrysler. Most of their production is earmarked for the government. Many feel the time may not be too far distant when they will be unable to operate, at least as independent concerns. Goodyear and Firestone, plus the European Michelin, and the British Dunlop, all producing tires and tubes, have similar status.

There are some smaller, individually owned American firms, including Tonsa, a big shoe chain which makes and sells shoes. It is owned by Irving Tow, who, with his brother Samuel, came to the Argentine in the twenties, set up a department store known as Casa Tow, and later sold it to a British firm with an agreement whereby he could not use his name in any similar business. So he set up Tonsa, and brilliantly built it into the largest firm of its kind in the country. It has some fifty-six branches throughout the republic, its own production facilities, and the most advanced merchandising techniques. Yet because of the name and manner of operation few Argentines recognize it as being imported from the United States.

President Perón's administration came to power determined to promote industrialization, to nationalize every foreign-owned enterprise it could, and to eliminate the nation's foreign debt. Except for the *estancieros*, or those who benefited from a foreign company, most Argentines

applauded the idea—or at least did not violently disapprove. The government bought machinery and equipment abroad with the huge foreign exchange supply built up during the war. Sometimes it purchased things that were not needed. Graft in some cases was beyond belief, yet Argentina bought nevertheless. By taking possession of important industries formerly under foreign membership, Argentina significantly reduced her service payments abroad. How much she lost on current operations at home no one has as yet indicated.

The government also took a special interest either as an outright owner or as a partner in important new sectors of industry. The preferred legal method—and there are still many methods highly doubtful, if not downright illegal by our standards—is the semi-official or mixed company. In such set-ups the government invites itself to join private capital “in the ownership and management of such public utilities, transportation companies, industrial and commercial ventures, as it feels essential.”

Many an Argentine worker will cite figures to prove that Argentina's industrialization has proceeded at a faster pace than industrialization in the United States during recent years. He will point with pride to his country's foodstuffs, her wondrous wines, her cigarettes and tobacco, her cement, soap, glassware, and clothing.

Not unnaturally, he will gloss over the fact that Argentina lacks coal, iron, sufficient petroleum; and that it has little cheap electric power or the fast-flowing rivers from which it could be developed. Instead, reflecting what's fed to him daily by the controlled press, he will insist that despite the lack of large-scale mills, Argentina is now reportedly producing one-third her steel requirements,

some 60 per cent of her ceramics, and 10 per cent of her machinery. "More and more," he will say, "we are becoming a buyer of capital goods, not a market for consumer goods. We ourselves are exporting to other Latin-American countries."

Even before the war, Argentine industry had begun rapid expansion. As hostilities drew near, several large international firms withdrew funds from Europe and invested them in Argentine cotton ginning, vegetable oil production, dairy produce, and textile mills. Some got great reserves of materials, machinery, equipment, and tools into the country which they turned to production, and of course tremendous profits. Others began making a wide range of drug items, first-class furniture, and perhaps best known to North Americans, the famed Argentine alligator bags and leather goods.

Many Argentine industrialists traded with both the Axis and Allies long after Pearl Harbor. Some stopped after the United States and Britain issued almost identical black lists of several thousand Axis or pro-Axis firms, since Argentines trading with black-listed companies or individuals, directly or indirectly, were denied any United States or Allied goods or services.

Perhaps one of the greatest industrial growths was in construction and the pipes and radiators, stoves and bathroom fixtures, fittings and the boilers necessary for the multitude of apartment houses, factories, office buildings, homes and other structures throughout the country.

Among those who expanded most were Bunge and Born. Its founders, E. A. Bunge and J. Born, were Belgian-Jewish financiers of world-wide connections. Leading figures in the firm in this generation were Alfredo Hirsch,

a Jew, and Jorge Oster, a Catholic. The Bunges in the group, as well as members of the Hirsch family, both married into Argentina's aristocracy. Though the Jewish surname caused the latter to be singled out by anti-Semites, they had become Catholics. Bunge and Born controlled more than fifty companies, including flour mills, *estancias*, quebracho concessions, chemical and industrial firms, and loan associations. At one time they exported 30 per cent of all cereals in Argentina and were middle men for so many other products that they had most of the foreign exchange available. It was from them that the government bought its pounds and dollars rather than from banks.

The Bemberg industrial-financial empire was the largest family fortune in Argentina. It was headed in the third generation by Otto and Federico, two gentlemen of high ability and character. They produced most of the beer in Argentina, including Quilmes and Palermo and also had interests in Rheingold Beer in the United States. Stock of their Quilmes Company was listed on the Paris Bourse and actively traded in. They owned malt companies, industrial credits, factories, *estancias*, cotton companies, winter resorts, mortgages and banks.

Their fortune was so vast and their ability in business and astuteness so well recognized that jealousies were created among both government officials and business people of lesser caliber.

When Otto Sebastian Bemberg, father of Otto and Federico, died in Paris in 1934, and the Bembergs declared and paid inheritance taxes in France, of which country the elder Bemberg was a citizen, political rum-

blings were inevitable. A story current in Buenos Aires is that the military regime might have ignored this fact—save for one incident. When Señora de Perón was in Paris one of her aides suggested to Otto's widow that it would be a gracious gesture to invite Evita to tea or perhaps to dinner, since after all she was the First Lady of Argentina.

She refused. The story goes that Evita de Perón then called the President on the long-distance phone and urged him to move full speed ahead in levying a higher settlement than that contemplated against the Bembergs. Later in Buenos Aires the wits pointed out that failure to give this tea party was probably one of the most expensive acts on record—costing about twenty million dollars.

As the government moved to industrialize Argentina, its policy became one of state socialism, though it never admits such a term. Private capital is neither sufficient nor interested enough to carry out the vast projects Argentina wants and possibly needs. What President Perón has done in some ways goes far beyond what the British Labor Party tried during its term of power.

Strange to North Americans—yet in a way inevitable in the Latin pattern—those Argentines who believe the government must finance industrialization are often themselves very conservative. Yet, they do not realize the kind of labyrinth created when every state-dominated economy is actually a will-o'-the-wisp. At first it seems an easy way of eliminating all the risks, worries, and iniquities of free enterprise. Every nation that has tried such short cuts has found that government is no substitute for pri-

vate initiative. The regime in power is forced on and on by its momentum to more rigorous authoritarian rule.

Over and over it is proven that there is no man or group of men wise enough to oversee all the details of the national economy. The problems that arise are countless and all seem to interlock. An attempted solution, more often than not, raises more serious problems.

When Perón became President, gold and hard-currency reserves had risen to 6,032,000,000 *pesos*, while monetary inflation had begun. The *peso* was still converted at four to the dollar and reserves were 175 per cent of currency, 41 per cent of all Argentine money outstanding. If prices had risen, so had wages.

By April 30, 1952, net gold and exchange reserves had fallen to 1,354,000,000 *pesos*. Currency in circulation had risen to 17,260,000,000, money in public hands to 45,038,000,000 *pesos*. This tremendous loss in reserves coupled with the increase in the supply of *pesos* left far too little in reserve to back all the *pesos* then in existence. And after successive devaluations ("readjustments" in the multiple-exchange rates) in 1949 and 1950, those *pesos* were worth no more than 20 cents at official exchange, 4 cents on the black market, 7 cents on the average. The national debt, 7.1 billion *pesos* at the end of 1943, had risen to over 34 billions.

In the first four months of 1952 the government pumped 1,330,000,000 new *pesos* into the top-heavy financial structure, and made available an additional 1,845,000,000 *pesos* in new bank credits; the total of loans stood at 44,158,000,000 *pesos*, a staggering 163 per cent of deposits.

For all the cash and credit, businesses and businessmen

were strapped. Stock quotations normally keep pace with inflation, but on the Buenos Aires stock market a list of ten blue chip issues worth an average of 220 *pesos* a share at the start of 1952 sold on May 22 for 157, more than a 25 per cent loss in 22 weeks.

The most solid firms were offering promissory notes in payment of current bills, and one for 420,000 *pesos* from a conservative metal-working establishment was discounted at 8 per cent a month. The few individuals with cash available for private loans were collecting up to 15 per cent, a level at which the fee is no longer interest but participation.

Commercial failures in May, 1952, totaled 250,488,503 *pesos*, nearly double in one month the total figure for 1951, when the year's total was 127,000,000. At that, they were being held down by executive order: that same month a bankrupt cement block firm, Fortalit, began firing workers preparatory to going out of business, but was ordered by the Ministry of Economy to revoke dismissals and resume production within ten days, lose money or not. This was one of several examples which made observers believe the government was motivated primarily by fear of mass unemployment.

The Argentine and His Government

THEY TELL a story in Buenos Aires about a new Ambassador who, on the day after his arrival, paid a series of courtesy calls on the President and other high-ranking Cabinet and Congressional officials. Returning to his residence, he telephoned his downtown office.

Believing his line was tapped, he talked deliberately with glowing comments on the brilliance, personality, and intelligence of each man that he met. Within a week, the smiles and the warmth of the greetings he received from various officials made his future activities smooth and effortless. Only then did he send back a frank, honest, untapped report.

An Ambassador wanting to carry out his assignment in Argentina has to make a point of saying, over the outside telephone, only what he would be willing to have printed on the front pages of the afternoon papers. He also has

to make sure that no confidential matter is ever discussed where it could possibly be overheard.

Many Argentines consider the Perón government's interference in their private lives annoying and stifling, but it is unique only in degree. Even observers who compare the Perón regime with that of Rosas would hesitate to describe the intervening governments as flaming democracies. In Argentina, the government has always run the citizen more than the citizen has run the government. The average Argentine has always been in more intimate daily contact with his rulers than we have, even with all our new agencies, rules, and regulations.

Historically-minded Argentines will tell you that they, like most of their Latin neighbors, have suffered from *caudillismo*—bossism—the tendency to follow a strong leader rather than a set of principles. Despite Argentina's experiments with democracy, its predominately literate, stable population, and its sound economy, it has never completely gotten away from the *caudillo* tradition. This was brought from Spain by the *conquistadores* and it flourished on the *pampa*. The *gaucho caudillo* fought Indians, local rivals, and finally national leaders. As Argentina advanced economically and politically, the Argentines lost some of their zest for fighting—prosperity always tends to build a more conservative, less venture-some people. But the *caudillo* idea lost little of its hold.

European immigrants easily transplanted their old Mediterranean political tradition of personalism to the *pampa*. The Argentines made few attempts to interest the newcomers in local affairs, and often the immigrant did not care who ruled, so long as the government was reasonably efficient and maintained order.

All Argentines were brought up by Church and family to respect the rule of leadership from above. They never really developed a sense of participation in and responsibility for self-government. They did discuss and argue politics fiercely and still do today. Argentines have always talked more than they have acted—a characteristic common to many people.

The President of Argentina has vast authority. He not only proposes laws to Congress and has power to veto legislation: he can issue decrees that have the effect of law. He makes the policies that govern the nation, and can put them into effect without consulting Congress.

The President's control of national finances extends far beyond our concept of executive authority. Not only may he submit budget estimates to Congress but he may spend money that Congress has not appropriated, and for purposes that it has not been specifically authorized. He may appoint and remove almost all of his administration without consulting Congress. And he may expel from the country any aliens convicted of a crime by a foreign court, or whose presence compromises the public security or perturbs the public order.

By declaring a state of siege, a Latin American President may toss out all constitutional guarantees and make himself an absolute dictator. Both old and new Argentine constitutions provide that the President may declare, with the consent of the Senate, one or several districts of the nation in a state of siege for a limited time in case of foreign attack. In case of internal disturbance, he has the power only when Congress is in recess. The Constitution of 1949, which increased the powers of the President, provides that he may also declare a state of precaution or

alarm in case "of a disturbance of public order which threatens to disrupt normal developments in the life or essential activities of the population."

Alexander W. Weddell, a former United States Ambassador to Argentina, once pointed out that the Anglo-Saxon mind is essentially legislative while the Latin is essentially executive. Argentina, he explained, inherited from Spain traditions of a vigorous executive, accustomed to act without consulting any other authority and overriding the legislature whenever it conflicted with his desires. The idea of an executive subordinate to the legislator was completely foreign to Spanish ideas. All during Argentine history, executive supremacy has been the rule.

Many Latin American constitutions read much like ours, but the citizens take a different view of them. Instead of recognizing the constitution as a fundamental, superior law, Latin Americans regard it as an ideal toward which they are striving. Many Argentines admit their legislation, constitutional and otherwise, was never expected to work as it reads. Give a group of Argentines a chance to draw up a law, and they will do it extremely well. But asking them to make it practical is something else again. "Practicality, practicality, that is all you *Yanquis* think about," they will probably tell you.

Some Argentines feel this is due to their inability to take positive action in order to move ahead rapidly to accomplish a task. Others confess that so many Argentines are accustomed to thinking selfishly of their own needs and desires that they are unable to cooperate, despite their high-sounding principles.

The founding fathers of most Latin American countries

tried to avoid *continuismo* by providing that the President could not be re-elected immediately. Argentina's Constitution of 1853 set the executive's term at six years, with no re-election for another six-year period. That constitution had only been amended a few times before Perón became President: he decided it needed to be modernized. In 1949 a Perón-dominated Constitutional Assembly met in the blazing summer heat and voted to abandon the traditional prohibition on immediate re-election of the President. This cleared the way for Perón's second election. When North Americans pointed out that Perón was the first Argentine President to succeed himself, Argentines protested: "If Franklin D. Roosevelt could be elected for four terms, why should you complain about Perón being President for two?"

The assemblymen made only one change in the brief preamble to the Constitution, the 150 words or so every Argentine school boy and girl learned to recite in the past one hundred years. The brief addition epitomized Perón's philosophy: The nation is "constituted socially just, economically free, and politically sovereign." But within the body of the document were more important changes, expanding the powers of government and President, and embodying major points affecting every citizen. The State is empowered to take a far more active role in every phase of activity concerning every phase of the Argentine's daily life—political, economic, social.

Workers, says the Constitution, have the right to work for a fair reward, to acquire skill, to worthy working conditions, to the preservation of health, to their well-being, to social security, to protection of their families, to economic improvement and to the defense of their occupa-

tional interests. Nothing is said about their right to strike.

Old people are, according to the new Constitution, given the right to assistance, lodging, sustenance, clothing, care of physical and moral health, recreation, work, tranquility, and respect. The State is pledged to support marriage and family property and to aid mothers. Children are to have the "special and privileged consideration of the State." Primary and advanced schooling are to be provided. The universities must set up obligatory courses for students' political formation "so that each pupil may know the essence of what is Argentine; the spiritual, economic, social and political reality of his country, the evolution and historical mission of the Argentine Republic and so that he may acquire a consciousness of the responsibility he should assume in the undertaking of achieving and consolidating the aims recognized and established in this Constitution."

Businessmen found the Constitution gave the State control of all foreign trade. It also ruled minerals, waterfalls, petroleum fields, coal fields, gas deposits, and other sources of energy—with the exception of vegetable resources—were the "imprescriptible and inalienable property of the Nation." Public services in private possession should be transferred to the State by purchase or expropriation with prior indemnity.

The Argentines found that their new Constitution enabled Congress to draw up a budget to cover as many as three years and gave the President authority to coin money and regulate its value. It allowed the President to veto part of a bill submitted to him by Congress rather than having to accept or reject the whole measure. The

power of Congress was restricted by a provision that only the President can determine subjects to be discussed by special sessions.

The new Constitution also made the judiciary branch of the government more or less subservient to the executive. In 1946 Perón had declared war on the Supreme Court, which had ruled many of his decrees unconstitutional. The Argentines revered their Supreme Court as highly as we and most were furious when peronista senators impeached four distinguished justices and the Attorney General. Perón then staffed the high court with his supporters who had direct supervision over judges of lesser federal courts, telling our newsmen: "Well, did not your Franklin D. Roosevelt try to pack the Supreme Court when it did not do what he wanted?"

Some idea of where President Perón is heading became clear in December, 1951. Without inviting or even informing opposition parties, his government staged a Constituent Assembly in the remote Chaco Territory along the Paraguayan border, 450 miles northwest of Buenos Aires. Acting quickly, the territory was made Argentina's fifteenth province and named Presidente Perón Province.

The Constitution of the new province opens with the words "This is a worker state." It establishes favored trade unionists, that is, members of Perón's General Confederation of Labor as a new aristocracy of the land. They will enjoy a heavily weighted vote in elections. Of the provincial Chamber's 30 deputies, 15 will be chosen by the province's estimated 200,000 ordinary voters; 15 by its estimated 30,000 union members. There will be two types of polling booths—one for the public, including

independent union members, the other for CGT members only.

The new Constitution also provides that only members of selected "professional organizations," that is, Confederation unions, may serve on the province's juries.

The angry Radical and Social parties said they would boycott future elections. They also pointed out that the trade union's double voting privilege violates all the national Constitution's provisions that all inhabitants of the State are equal before the law. But there is little they can do about it.

Most Argentines are passionately addicted to legalism, partly because so many professors, legislators, and other prominent men were trained as lawyers and keep a legalistic viewpoint all their lives. Although the President never went to law school, he shares this feeling. He has sometimes gone to extremes to accomplish his ends in a legal way. As a result, his regime has been marked by relatively little violence.

Perón maintains the forms of democratic republicanism. He gets Congress to authorize what he wants to do—like expropriate *La Prensa*. Congress is his rubber stamp in which the opposition is repeatedly brushed aside. There has been no move to abolish the opposition's seats in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies completely. Yet the opposition's arguments simply do not appear in the press except in rare instances. But to throw them out completely would not be in keeping with Argentine character.

The President reportedly feels that since he took all the proper legal steps to remake the Constitution he now can do anything he wishes under it. Argentines appreciate this official correctness, for most Argentines would no

more think of skirting it than they would dream of going out with mussed hair or an ill-pressed suit.

On the other hand, their emphasis on legal correctness does not mean that most Argentines want strictly to obey the law.

Argentines, says writer Ernesto Sabato, "never take a law or an ordinance at its face value—they interpret it. Every Argentine is an expert in the theory of the law. But the truth of the matter is that he never limits himself to interpreting the law. He interprets it in his favor, that is to say, he violates it. He adduces this or that reason, but the real one is because (as the old Spanish saying goes) 'It is his royal pleasure' a concept which makes every subject the king's equal."

Sabato points out that Buenos Aires has the worst traffic conditions of any Latin city because the pedestrian invariably does his royal pleasure. Every mayor of Buenos Aires who has attempted to regulate traffic has come the most ignominious cropper. One decided to proceed slowly, a street at a time, part of a street, one corner. He stationed four policemen at this corner to supervise the observance of the traffic ordinance. It was such an entertaining sight that the *porteños* gathered by the hundreds as though it were a sideshow. The result was that the intersection turned into the worst traffic snarl in the city. This had to be returned to normal with the pedestrian as fractious as before, crossing the streets whenever and however he pleases.

The most sought-after privilege an Argentine can acquire is some form of *fuero*, the old Spanish privilege which exempted its holder from compliance with regulations. Argentines do not think it is peculiar that the first

derecho, or right, granted to all lawmakers from Congressmen down to City Councilmen is the legal right to break laws. Often when an Argentine community secured control of an expropriated electrical plant or waterworks, all officials immediately put themselves on the free list. "Why not?" many will ask you. "Don't we deserve it? Besides, we who have the privilege know how to use it."

President Perón often proclaims that there are no more specially privileged Argentines, but many say that today the number is far greater than ever. After the government bought the railroads from Britain in 1948, one of its biggest headaches was collecting fares from passengers. Ardent peronistas would declare: "But the railroads are ours now!" Most people seldom bothered to buy tickets before boarding a train—there was always the chance your stop would come before the conductor appeared, or perhaps you could tip him to let you ride free. To stop this the government slapped a flat twenty-*peso* fine on all passengers who did not buy their tickets in the station. Some Argentines were so angry at this attempt to make them pay that they tossed a conductor off the train. Another protesting passenger pulled a gun. Crowds gathered at the stations to shout "Death to the fine!" Eventually the incidents decreased, but riding without a ticket was still the thing to do, since it was only the government that was not collecting.

Argentines say the *fuero* is so deeply a part of Argentine thinking it tends to create general disrespect for laws and law enforcement. Stemming directly from Spain and Italy, this tradition has been part of Argentine life so long no one can remember when it did not exist. Rarely, however, is it publicized in Argentina. Even the mention

here will undoubtedly draw protests from Argentines who insist "But why talk about such things?" or "But it's so much worse in other Latin countries, why pick on us?"

Depending on his political viewpoint, the average Argentine blames most of this corruption on the opposition. Even if the party he supports is "in," somehow he will hold its enemies responsible for any governmental graft. For example, most of those who opposed Perón felt that the greatest corruption of recent times occurred during the years Miguel Miranda headed the Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Exchange (I.A.P.I.). Peronistas charge that long before this the Banco de la Nación followed a policy of lending money to *politicos* with influence, a "courtesy" often repaid with needed legislation or ministerial action. The German banks were also extremely liberal in extending credits, especially to Argentine Army officers whose favor they sought.

Some Argentines feel that when well-to-do *estancieros* and businessmen served in government there was less graft and corruption. Yet others say that in a number of cases where top-ranking Argentines acted as lawyers for foreign concerns and later became cabinet ministers or Congressmen, they helped put through laws which gave their former clients what they wanted on a silver platter. Not until long afterwards was any hue and cry raised, and even then there were few indictments or convictions.

On a lesser level, Argentine businessmen who require an import or export permit, a construction license, or anything at all from the government, always expect they will have to grease someone's palm. The amount of necessary greasing depends on the warmth of one's relationship with the proper authority, and on the value of the favor.

This again is significant—for personal friendship can mean as much as money. Often as not the favor, or *gauchado*, is extended above or behind the law on political differences in return for what might be an expected favor at a later date.

Many large Argentine business firms keep a full-time employee or two whose job it is simply to maintain good relations with those in power. The company head himself generally considers it his task to watch the top level. The second, third, fourth, and fifth layers of bureaucrats are just as important, however. They can see that licenses and other papers are not buried or lost for months or even years.

The custom was followed even in foreign embassies which had what might be called an "expediter" familiar with the back doors of customs, immigration, and other key departments. He could achieve in a day what might otherwise take an infinitude of time, red tape, and protocol.

Private citizens needing such useful papers as the permanent identification *cedula* which all Argentines are obliged to carry, or a police good-conduct certificate necessary for a passport or a visa, know how many things can go wrong if a proper aide cannot be obtained. Naturally Argentines who can not afford such help wait in line outside the doors of the official offices, day after day. The others get speedy action.

The low salaries paid public employees make this extensive operation of small grafts almost inevitable. Unable to live on what he earns, the civil servant keeps his palm out for gratuities. It is interesting that rarely is the issue of eliminating graft raised in Argentine political

campaigns. Few political leaders have ever pledged clean-up drives. Apparently they feel graft is part of an established system bigger than any one man.

It is frequently said that nobody in Argentina keeps a completely honest set of books for the government tax collectors. "If such books were kept," one Argentine explained, "the collector probably would not believe them."

President Perón was once asked: "Why not decrease duties on imports and exports so as to encourage trade and instead broaden income taxes to include more people? The United States has long found this a far better method. It would seem so much better to tax profits than to put all sorts of restrictions on business and then try to get taxes out of losses."

"You do not understand the Argentines," he replied. "It would never work here. Our people are simply not temperamentally able to do this. If I were to try collecting such income taxes as you suggest, I would need as many tax collectors as taxpayers."

Politics and the Spoils System

THE SPOILS system is at the heart of Argentine and Latin-American public administration. But whereas our parties in power take some conciliatory steps to give important positions to the opposition, in the Argentine the group in power—long before Perón—was expected to take all the jobs—not just the big ones.

Fully as important as party service for the Argentine who wanted to climb the political ladder was the partisan aid rendered the boss just ahead, the district leader to his superior, he in turn to the next man a rung higher. It is true that in the past some outstanding men have been appointed to important ministries and ambassadorial posts because they were worthy citizens. But in general the spoils system has always applied a hundred per cent.

Moreover, while our politicians have used the spoils

of their own political victories to organize followers and build a tight, efficient political machine, before Perón there was little compact party organization in Argentina. Argentina's political parties have often changed structure and even names with great rapidity. They have rarely built up organizations able to maintain their vitality despite years of power.

Today most of President Perón's opponents are pretty sure they will never regain control at the polls. For one thing, the President controls all means of influencing voters. Opposition parties need permission even for a *churrasco*, barbecue—the equivalent of our clambake. They are forbidden to invite the people to wine festivals, where prospective voters used to soak up all the wine they could drink as they listened to candidates' golden promises of the future. Perón denies the press, radio, and most other means of publicity to his opponents.

And the President counts the ballots. In Argentina, as in many places where political parties seize and hold power for a long time, the controlling group usually wins. In the past, elections in Buenos Aires were fairly accurate, chiefly because everything could be watched by representatives of all parties. Outside the capital the party in power manipulated the election machinery so that the opposition got only a token vote.

In essence, those who oppose Perón feel their only hope lies in obtaining greater support from those groups who have the force to bring about a change. This means the Army, labor, and other organizations. Most people feel that only the Army could succeed by itself. Other groups would have to team up to force the regime out of power.

A peronista leader, on the other hand, expressed it this way: "If we voluntarily stepped down we could never again gain control except by another coup. Besides, we can hardly expect any forgiveness. Our fate would undoubtedly be imprisonment, exile, or worse. And that we are by no means willing to face."

As he took the oath of office for his unprecedented second term as President on June 4, Juan Domingo Perón epitomized the successful *caudillo*, 1952 style, an adroit and resourceful politician.

He uses the velvet glove rather than the iron hand. He employs roundabout methods to create a way of getting what he wants without appearing to move directly. A man of great personal magnetism, he can turn the charm on or off at will. He flatters the visitors he wants to impress with an attractive smile and makes them feel everything they say is tremendously important. Frequently he can take a completely different approach to each of half a dozen or so visitors—a practice which can, and does, often cause confusion.

His early-to-rise habits horrified more leisurely Argentines at first; now they are accustomed to his long hours in the Casa Rosada.

Like many other Latin politicians he is tremendously sensitive to criticism. He is frequently outraged by what he considers unfair personal criticism in the press, and especially in periodicals printed in North America, which his people erroneously tell him represent the views of the State Department.

President Perón admires many of the things we believe in, is indifferent to others, dislikes many more. He does not fear us. His anti-United States campaign is mostly

for domestic consumption: he does not take it too literally and is, or was, friendly to us. Privately he may say that his actions are "just like some of your American politicians—Big Bill Thompson of Chicago, for instance, fighting the King of England in his election campaign." But he does stir up many Argentines to be anti-Yankee.

The President does not want direct loans from the United States. He has built himself up as Argentina's Economic Liberator, asserting his country's sovereignty and financial independence. Like any dictator, he must preserve face in his own country, and when we emphasize the fact that we have granted him a credit all good will evaporates and he becomes resentful.

President Perón is utterly convinced of the justice of his own cause, and in this he had tremendous encouragement from his wife. Blonde, diminutive, brown-eyed Evita had a highly vivacious nature which covered a cool and calculating personality. She, far more than the President, was driven by the desire to dominate those who once rejected her. In many cases she forced her husband to make shrewd decisions, to resolve problems over which he worried and hesitated. Through her efforts in the Labor Ministry, the General Confederation of Labor, the Peronista Women's Party, her social welfare foundation, the press, radio, and newsreels, she directly intervened in almost every phase of Argentine life except the Army, where her following among the enlisted men and non-commissioned officers was not thought well of in higher military circles.

Her self-portrait, *La Razon de Mi Vida*, turned out to be more a paean to her husband than an autobiography. Expressing her mystic fanaticism and lack of proper per-

spective, she declared she truly felt she was the mother of her people.

One of her last statements promised: "Living or dead I will lead the women and the workers in defense of President Perón, leaving no brick standing that is not a peronista brick." As political and labor leaders vied in proposing new honors for her after her death, members of the Peronista Party were ordered to wear black ties to party functions for the rest of their lives.

Evita was always the center of attention in Argentina. The bitterness and adoration she aroused made her career so dazzling as to have been matched by few women in history. She was so set on achieving her ambitions that she could not compromise. Frequently she told friends: "Without fanaticism one cannot accomplish anything." And always she sought the center of attention, for, as much as anything else, she was dominated by a desire to make clear to those who at first ignored her that she was not merely their equal but their superior.

In fact, in conversations with members of Argentina's top economic group the point was frequently made that if, instead of snubbing her, they had somehow won her over to their side the whole course of Argentine history might have changed.

Evita's desire to assert herself was matched by seemingly boundless energy. Her ambition was like a motor without a governor, reaching incredible speed before racking itself to bits. It forced her to follow the rigorous diet that undermined her health. She wanted to have one of the loveliest figures in the world and to be the world's most expensively dressed woman. Constantly and as-

tutely she told her *descamisados*, or shirtless followers, that she wore her elaborate wardrobe only in trust for them . . . and that someday they would have similar luxuries.

The diet begun several years before her death gave her the svelte, glamorous figure that a crew of personal photographers snapped in literally thousands of costumes. But her diet sapped her youth and energy, weakened her already overworked body, and paved the way for the ravages first of pernicious anemia and later of cancer.

As a final resting place she wanted a memorial not unlike the Taj Mahal where her body would be permanently preserved and sanctified for future generations.

"Long after I am physically gone," she reportedly told friends, "I will, through this monument, continue as a dominant force in Argentina." The monument, as she conceived it, would keep her spirit alive for the Argentine people to whom she publicly described her "exalted body as a bridge over which the masses can carry their troubles to Perón."

The desire for self-perpetuation was always strong in her life. Her name was carved on so many buildings and was associated with so many organizations that a mere listing would fill a page. These included the Argentine benevolent organization which spends millions, homes for the aged and working girls, schools, streets and plazas, super-highways and bridges, the country's largest steamship, gas works, Buenos Aires' subway stations and even a newly discovered planet.

Her memorial tomb as Evita conceived it before her death was to depict all these. And here, according to her plans, were to come peronistas as to the shrine of a favor-

ite saint. On the sixth anniversary of President Perón's return to power, her husband decorated her for services and proclaimed the following day a national *fiesta* "in honor of Saint Evita." After her death, moves were made to give this beatification churchly authority. At the time of the anniversary Evita, in a choked, emotional speech, significantly called the title given her by her husband her greatest honor, adding: "I have left my bed to pay a debt of gratitude to Perón and to the workers. I do not care if I have to part with pieces of my life to pay for it."

The speech had an unexpected sincerity, for long before she reached the height of her power, Evita's vanity had a special obsession with immortality and permanent greatness. The clouded circumstances of her birth, crushing poverty, youthful lack of culture and education and the insults and humiliations suffered on the way up, gave her a drive she was determined would not be stopped even by death.

When Evita met Perón he was a brilliant young officer whose wife had died in 1939 just before he had returned from trips to Italy and Germany. They became friends, and Evita used her knowledge of the theater to aid Perón in his personal rise to military leadership. One example is typical. An earthquake had killed thousands in the remote province of San Juan. Perón, who then headed the Welfare Ministry, wanted some way of dramatizing the need for aid.

Evita suggested that he walk down Calle Florida, a bevy of beautiful actresses on each arm, theatrically "begging for the poor victims." Newspapers and newsreels, advised in advance, carried Perón's name to millions. And while other officers made purely technical

speeches, Evita gave Perón's talks on the radio all the rabble-rousing appeal she had learned in years of broadcasting. When, in October, 1945, he was temporarily toppled from power, Evita arranged to have him spirited from his hospital room to address a howling workers' mass meeting that swept him back into control.

A few months later, just before Perón ran for Argentina's Presidency, they married. Perón walked away with the election. Evita, sure Argentina's cattle barons who had so often rebuffed her ambitions would have to accept her as First Lady, entered what was perhaps her happiest period. She ordered herself a trousseau comprising furs, jewelry, and costly evening gowns. Buenos Aires' finest shops would be ordered to send over everything she fancied. When some had the "impertinence" to send bills she told them: "Are you not honored enough that I wear your things?"

But the parties at the big mansions did not materialize. Those of wealth and position gave a unanimous cold shoulder. Her only social invitations were official. Often even Perón's militarists were unable to make their wives and daughters take the hand of the wife of the President. To Evita, womanlike, this was the worst snub of all. She determined to show everybody—on her own terms. Again, eternally feminine, she was convinced the snubs had been due to two causes. One, her clothes and figure. Two, the fact that her family was unknown and lacking in traditional name or titles. She determined to show them quickly, as was her wont.

As with everything else she had ever done, Evita plunged ahead. She was an attractive woman with a lovely profile and perfect teeth, but she had inherited a

tendency to take on fat rapidly. This tendency probably came from her mother, Juana Ibarguran, a plump, jolly woman and mother of five. So Evita began dieting, no easy or usual task in a country such as Argentina. Ruthlessly she eliminated the fancy teas, the lush luncheons and the heavy late dinners standard among so many Argentines. Often she skipped meals, and she had herself repeatedly massaged. She completely eliminated drinking and smoking, in contrast to the President who is a chain smoker. In less time than seemed possible she trimmed a third off her former weight. To further emphasize slimness, all of her outfits were made almost skin-tight.

Then she left for Europe. Her aim there was to impress doubters at home by the reception she got abroad. Secondly, she expected to be made a papal marquise in Rome, a title which would force Argentine society to accept her.

Her sixty-four costumes, two personal maids, her Czarina's collection of jewels dazzled Europeans. So did her figure. But her clothes struck them as tricky and in poor taste. One, a black, clinging costume which she donned to be received by His Holiness the Pope, may have cost her the papal honor she desired. Arriving twenty minutes late for her audience, she was given a routine half-hour interview and no honors at all.

Bitter, disappointed, but too good an actress ever to show it, Evita partially relieved her anger in typically womanly fashion. She changed her hair color to pale blond and had it upswept continental-style. Then she threw out rooms full of her inelegant, multi-hued clothes, bought \$40,000 worth of new clothes from Paris' Dior,

Fath, Balmain, and Marcel Rochas. As if to augment her dignity, she even dropped the name Evita and insisted on the formal Señora Maria Eva Duarte de Perón.

Next, she arranged to give herself a monster welcoming celebration in Buenos Aires. Immediately thereafter she plunged into a frenzy of activities which for almost three years left Argentines, and the rest of the world, dazzled. All the time she was burning herself up under the same rigorous diet.

Originally the President had given her a desk in the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, a key agency which made labor support his principal power prop. Primarily he sought to keep his wife occupied by taking her mind off her lack of women friends and social activity. Evita, however, wanted other activities. Her ambition was boundless.

She took over Perón's propaganda, labor relations, and scores of other activities. She rose at 7:00 A.M., and began holding daily sessions with hundreds of "deserving poor." One incident is typical. A group of representatives of a suburban utility company was meeting in the Ministry with labor representatives seeking an increase in wages. As was her custom, she suddenly swept into the room and asked: "What are you boys and girls discussing?" The utility people explained the request for the pay increase and said that if they granted it they would be bankrupt within a month or two.

"Give the boys and girls what they want, I'll arrange things," she said. The firm agreed to the increases. Evita did not keep her promise, and so a week later the firm sent its representatives to call and remind her of what she had said.

"How much will it cost you a month?" she asked. They cited the amount.

"I will give you an order on the Central Bank—they will pay you the difference every month," Evita said. Later an official of the Central Bank was asked how the bookkeeping procedures were handled on such an operation. Shrugging his shoulders he smiled and said: "Well, we have many ways of doing things, and we do not believe too much in accounting anyway."

Señora Perón not only granted financial help but she dispensed medical advice to many of those who came to ask for aid. Frequently she would order three grams of aureomycin or two of streptomycin.

Her own health continued to decline. In January, 1950, her illness was first publicly revealed. Dr. Oscar Ivanissevich, Argentine Minister of Education and a well-regarded surgeon, operated for what was described as appendicitis. Though announcements reported no complications, she never completely recovered. For this and other reasons, Dr. Ivanissevich lost favor and secretly Evita began receiving treatment for her growing illness from another physician, Dr. Helen Zawarski of Buenos Aires' National Central Hospital.

Though warned that the red corpuscles in her blood were only a third of normal, she kept driving herself harder. She had one more goal—to secure voting rights for Argentine women and have Perón re-elected President and herself the country's first woman Vice-President.

Here, at last, would be official recognition, the thing she had always been denied. Again, with dramatic showmanship, the stage was ready. There would be a monster demonstration with two million fanatical supporters de-

manding that she accept. Society would be shown. So would the Army—the group which makes and unmakes presidents and which had been increasingly restive at her growing power. During the two-day demonstration, August 22 and 23, 1951, peddlers sold flags, banners, and *empanedas*—the little meat pies so favored by Argentines. Evita got her acclamation—on schedule. The President made a speech, and a clamor arose for her. Suitably flustered, Evita appeared expressing amazed surprise. But instead of millions there were, contrary to what was said in the controlled press, scarcely three hundred thousand persons. She was like a hostess whose guests did not appear. Her undeniable beauty had taken on a glacial quality, giving her face a masklike appearance. In place of her once almost girlish laughter there was a vocal intensity like that of a woman consumed.

A few days later the Army officials gave President Perón an ultimatum. Either Evita would restrain her ambition or they would act—and nothing would change them. The shock further aggravated her condition. Almost simultaneously with news of an abortive military revolt against the President in September, 1951, Perón's propaganda ministry announced that she was suffering from influenza. A few days later the ministry reported that she had pernicious anemia "of regular intensity, being treated with transfusions, absolute rest and general medication." Less than three weeks later—after one public appearance at the Loyalty Day rally where she was termed a saint—word was given that treatment would be accepted from a North American surgeon.

Dr. Abel Carcano, noted Argentine cancer specialist,

flew to New York on a passport issued on President Perón's direct order. He persuaded Dr. George Pack, famous cancer surgeon and radiologist of New York's Memorial Hospital, to fly back with him to Buenos Aires on October 22, 1951. On November 4, Evita was admitted to the Polyclínico Presidente Perón, one of Argentina's most modern and best equipped hospitals. Its entire second floor had been expectantly cleared for a week. Two days later, official bulletins reported surgery recommended by the attending doctors was carried out. There was no indication whether Dr. Pack or Dr. Ricardo Finocchietto, an Argentine surgeon in attendance, performed.

On Saturday, July 16, 1952, the crowds keeping vigil outside the Presidential residence saw the dim light on the second floor bedroom snap out and a moment later Perón himself announced to waiting cabinet ministers: "Evita is dead."

For days the normal life of the country was paralyzed. A national demonstration of grief over the loss of their First Lady was staged by the workers. Most observers felt the emotion genuine, proof that Evita, who had led her people into totalitarianism and toward bankruptcy, had also won their love.

The powerful Partido Peronista advocates peronism and *justicialismo*, though few party members could tell you just exactly what those terms mean. In 1952 the Association of Argentine Writers asked academicians of Argentina and Spain to introduce officially the two isms into the Spanish language. The government newspaper *Clarín* declared that since such terms as Communism, Socialism, Conservatism, and Liberalism had infiltrated

into the language, the peronistas' request was quite reasonable.

Official definitions were forthcoming: Peronism is a "movement striving for national unity and using *justicialismo* as its political, economic, and social doctrine." *Justicialismo* is "a new philosophy of living—simple, practical, popular, profoundly Christian, and profoundly human." True peronistas felt that a more down-to-earth meaning was that expressed by the daily actions of Perón and Evita.

Even if an Argentine reads no newspapers, listens to no radio, avoids the theater and movies, he finds ample evidences of *El Lider* everywhere. On every new structure built by the government, on every road improvement, on every park beautification project are the tremendous *Perón Cumple* and *Evita Dignifica* signs. Everywhere throughout Argentina are tremendous pictures of Perón and the "martyred" Evita—on the walls of buildings, in every office and schoolroom, in shop windows, on the fronts of tram cars and busses.

If you ask an anti-peronista what party he belongs to, he will probably reply Radical, Conservative, or Socialist. He may warn you not to translate the names literally—except for the Socialists, the terms mean little more than our party designations. Your Argentine friend will tell you his party rarely unites with another—each one wants to be leader, and hates to give up its independence. Now there is another reason for non-cooperation: Perón made it legally impossible for parties to form a coalition.

In the last century the Conservatives pretty much ruled the country body and soul. They believed Argentina should remain a semi-colonial state, sell her meat

and wheat for high prices, and not think of industrializing. Regaining power in 1930, they held it by sheer audacity until 1943.

One outstanding exception to the usual Conservative ruler was President Roberto M. Ortiz, who was elected in 1937. Immediately after his inauguration President Ortiz repudiated election frauds and pledged himself to restore democratic government and honest election. Since this spelled doom for the anti-democratic Conservatives, they became his implacable enemies. When President Roosevelt sent his famous message to Hitler and Mussolini in 1938, urging them not to plunge the world into another war, President Ortiz was the first chief of state to express hearty approval. His pro-American speeches and his democratic acts made him an idol of the common people.

But in 1940, approaching blindness forced him to turn the government over to his Vice President, Ramón Castillo. Many Argentines point out that the change was similar to what might have happened if Franklin D. Roosevelt had had to turn over the Presidency to conservative John Garner during his first term. The New Deal might never have come about. "This shows," Argentines say, "that even in your country one man can change the course of events."

Castillo had made no secret of his sympathy for the Nazis and Fascists. One week after Pearl Harbor he imposed a state of siege and maintained it for nearly eighteen months, until he was finally and forcibly removed from office in June, 1943.

Many Argentines feel the recent unimaginative leadership and inner-party squabbling of the Union Cívica Radical are responsible for the undemocratic govern-

ments they have had since 1930. The Radical Party was formed in 1890 to represent the growing liberal element in Argentina. It is not radical, but just about dead center politically. Its announced aim was honest government, and it represented the new middle class.

Today the Radical Party advocates many of Perón's aims: controlled economy, liberal labor laws, and increased industrialization. In some ways its leaders seek to outdo Perón by urging the nationalization of even more industries than he, for instance the meat-packing plants. Radicals are less anti-American than peronistas, and favor freedom of speech and press. "We want to allow every group the right to say what it pleases," they explain. "This is in sharp contrast with the peronistas, who believe that only the government has that privilege and personal rights are secondary."

In 1894, a leftist Radical founded the Socialist Party on Marxist principles. Ten years later it elected its first deputy to Congress from Buenos Aires, the aforementioned mustacioed Dr. Alfredo L. Palacios. The party won a sizable membership among the workers in the capital and its suburbs, attracting many intellectuals and middle-class Argentines. It advocated a new and balanced economy between the capital and the interior and an improved relationship between industry and agriculture. Organized along democratic lines, its leaders consulted the rank and file on all major matters of elections and policies, while the other parties followed the old-line political committee control.

For many years before Perón the Socialists won a majority in Buenos Aires elections. But the party rarely

took a strong position on issues within the labor movement, and the membership of trade union leaders in the Socialist Party became largely formal and traditional. The Socialists lost ground when President Perón made his big play for the workers. In many cases union officials went over to Perón's Party, leaving old-time Socialist leaders completely stranded.

By the late 1940's the Socialist Party had become the party of the intelligentsia par excellence, with particular strength among the anti-Perón students. Before they were suppressed, the Socialist publications, especially the weekly, *La Vanguardia*, were among the widest read, the most sprightly and biting of all opposed to Perón.

Although the 77,318 Communist votes in the 1952 election topped the Socialist total, the Reds actually have less influence in Argentina. The Argentine Communist Party got its start in 1919 because of a rift in the Socialist Party. The going was rough until the depression of the 1930's, when, despite persecution, the Communists began to recruit hundreds of members.

In November, 1951, Frank Kelly, Foreign Editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, found the Communists well entrenched in the General Confederation of Labor and its textile, construction, light and power, maritime and railroad unions, as well as those of the cooks, waiters and bakers. Many were shop stewards and committeemen, active and forceful in promoting their party's aims.

Latin American Communists get a great deal of their strength from the intellectuals—writers, teachers, artists, etc. In early 1952, estimates put the number of card-carrying Argentine Reds at between 35,000 and 50,000.

Most of them were in Buenos Aires, city and province, and others in Rosario, Córdoba, Mendoza, and parts of Santa Fé. No one knows the number of Red sympathizers.

Perhaps the best way to judge the likelihood of Communist success in Argentina is to consider some of their appeals and note why some have drawn followers and others failed because of the very nature of the Argentines themselves.

The Marxist theory that a dominant class has always exploited the masses and that the class struggle has always been the main agency of historical change has helped win over some of Argentina's leading labor groups. But the milder Socialist interpretation always had a greater appeal. Generally, Communist success in unions depended on specific individual leadership in certain groups—another instance of Argentines following a *caudillo* rather than a set of principles. Naturally, the Argentine workers who suffered most from the low living and working standards were most anxious for the kind of Utopia promised by the Communists.

Nationalization of foreign-owned utilities "essential to the good of the State" has always had a strong appeal. As noted in the new Constitution, this is Perón's policy and also the ideal of a great many Argentines, pro- and anti-Perón. Those Argentines who resented United States, British, and other foreign influence were sold on the idea that foreigners had no such hold in the Soviet Union.

The strongest Communist appeals have been to those Argentines who sought neutrality in international relations. The Communists now articulate this as opposition to the United States program for arms standardization in Latin America.

Soviet cultural achievements have also been stressed, generally via special institutes established in Argentina by the Soviet Embassy and legations. During the war and immediately after, Soviet propaganda emphasized Russia's wartime economy and power. The U.S.S.R. sponsored a few exhibitions of their tanks, guns, and planes. Much more was accomplished by the United States press services and films which carried stories that indirectly sold the idea of Moscow strength.

Of course this was during the period when Washington was all for Russia's winning friends in Latin America. The United States conducted most of the negotiations which led to the resumption of Argentine diplomatic relations with Moscow on June 6, 1946. At the time, our viewpoint was that Latin America, and especially Argentina, had to export to live. Since we could not absorb what Argentina produced, getting Russia to exchange Argentine meat, wheat, and agricultural products for cars, tractors, and farm machinery which the U.S.S.R. was expected to supply was regarded as sound thinking. The Russians exported little. But the promise did have an immediate political and propaganda repercussion.

When the Kremlin line supported the United States, Argentine Communists, of course, went along. They even heaped praise on pro-Allied dictators whose jails were full of Reds. Winston Churchill became a noteworthy subject for some Communist dailies during the first Big Three meetings.

Since then, Uncle Sam has become the favorite Soviet whipping boy. At times the Communists have moved ahead on their own, hitting at our alleged failure to give Argentina the machinery she needed for industrialization.

Most Argentines fear leftist extremism far more than Naziism or Fascism. During the war, both of the latter groups had far stronger support than did the Communists, and Perón's setup was more or less molded in their image.

The Argentines' sense of individuality makes them oppose a too-rigid Moscow doctrine. The Communists, realizing this, have sought to claim that they are a hundred per cent Argentines. The pro-Nazi nationalists made similar protestations in their days of ascendancy, with considerably more success. One reason, perhaps, is that as Catholics the Argentines have always known of the Church's opposition to Communism.

The Russian Embassy in Buenos Aires has had a sizable staff. However, there is virtually no trade between Russia and the Argentines and it stands to reason that the employees of the Russian Embassy are mostly used for purposes of propaganda for which millions of dollars are spent each year. About half the money is estimated to come from Russia, the other half being subscribed by local Communists. Schools were established for the teaching of methods of street fighting and the handling of mobs, and small arms for distribution were run up the river as far as Rosario. The employees of the satellite ministries were all paid through the Russian Embassy so that it could maintain the control of their activities.

In Argentina the Communists work whenever they find an opening—with labor, with liberal and intellectual groups, and with the Peronists. The Reds have pretty well abandoned their separatist tendencies to concentrate on infiltration. They have sought to win over the strongly

nationalistic young Argentines who have been disillusioned and disgruntled by the years of Conservative government. Since these men and women already hated foreign capital and democracy, the Communists have tried to convert them to revolutionaries.

Argentine Communists denounced the Ramirez regime as fascistic. They cooperated with Radicals, Conservatives, and Socialists in exile in Uruguay to fight the military government. The Reds violently opposed Perón's first election, made frequent use of the word "Peronazi" to describe his followers, and sometimes clashed with them in the streets.

Early in 1946 the Communists suddenly began to make distinctions between "good" and "bad" Peronists. The change occurred shortly after the arrival of a Soviet trade mission to Buenos Aires. In June, two days after his first inauguration, Perón announced the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Russia. The Communist daily, *La Hora*, reciprocated by declaring Perón's election triumph was "the result of popular unity against imperialism and the oligarchy." The party's chief leader, Victor Codovilla, announced: "We shall support the Perón government with reservations."

President Perón was quite aware of the Communists' change in line. He said the party "has adopted a more skillful tactic, although a quite obvious one of infiltrating the ranks of labor. It acts as a wolf in sheep's clothing."

Yet for three years the President showed the Reds a surprisingly large degree of toleration. The Communist press was virtually untouched. He allowed the Communists to have two deputies in the Mendoza provincial legis-

lature, and about half a dozen city councilmen. But he set up three federal agencies to keep meticulous track of the Reds. Later he purged suspected members and fellow travelers from schools, universities, and public posts.

President Perón may believe he has gained a good deal from his system of permitting the Reds to operate under his strict surveillance. His extensive espionage system knows what every Communist, and every other Perón opponent, is doing and planning.

In 1949, the Communist newspaper was closed by the police, and now Communists have the same trouble publishing propaganda, showing their movies, and calling public meetings that other opposition parties have. The Communist candidate for President in 1951, Rodolfo Ghioldi, was critically shot in the lung at a campaign rally in Paraná.

But early in 1952, Argentine delegates attended the highly-touted International Economic Conference in Moscow. President Perón is said to have approved the meeting by declaring it would afford a defense of European interests against the harmful steps of the United States.

Ofttimes the Argentine Communists claim that the only trouble with Perón is that he has not carried out his own program as effectively as he might. "We are better peronistas than Perón," they assert. "And we were first to attack the United States as a stronghold of the malefactors of great wealth and as a plutocratic imperialistic nation."

The true extent of Communist success may not be known for a long time. But this much is obvious: Where-

ever there is widespread poverty accompanied by rising living costs, increasing economic difficulties, and growing class hatred, Communists find a fertile breeding ground. This condition is more true of some other nations in Latin America than of the Argentines.

The Argentines and Their Army

A CAFÉ story, currently popular in Buenos Aires, concerns the mother of three sons. One was a genius, the second average, the third an idiot. Asked what she wanted them to be when they grew up, she replied: "The first will be a judge. The next will run the family *estancia*. And the third has but one choice: he must become an Army officer."

While the tale illustrates the attitude of many Argentines toward the military force which, since 1943, has dominated their government, it fails to throw much light on a more important question: How can an Army which has steadily lost favor with an increasing number of Argentines remain in power after nine years?

In the eyes of many an Argentine their Army is an Army of Occupation. A non-militaristic people who

avoid conscription like the plague, they sometimes feel their Army's maneuvering, posturing, and bickering is either opera bouffe, or the scrapping of a group of robber barons disputing their take. Sometimes Army leaders have appeared brutally terroristic. At other times they keep themselves very much in the background.

Many an Argentine is convinced the Army runs Perón. Others insist Perón runs the Army. All agree the Army's role as the nation's defender is secondary. Argentina's Army has not fought a real war since shortly after our Civil War. It sent no troops to fight in World Wars I and II; not even a token force to Korea. Essentially, the Army must be considered a part of government, for the Army makes the government and not the government the Army. No administration has ever stayed in power in Argentina when it lacked Army support. And, most believe no government can stay in power long if the Army does not back it.

The term "Army" can mean many things, but the control is in the hands of the top-ranking officers. Most foreign observers concede their power is not nearly as great as it was in the time of the *coup d'état*. Since then Perón has twice been elected President, moved into every phase of Argentine life and, as we have seen, developed labor as a strong and vital force. Perón, moreover, has succeeded in neutralizing many other ambitious officers who might have moved to force him out.

Many Argentines believe that without Army backing no one but an assassin could push Perón out if he does not want to retire. Such moves, of course, cannot be forecast. But some things about the Army's collective personality, which is stronger than that of any of its leaders,

can be described and may in themselves provide a clue.

What kind of Army has Argentina? What gives the Army its influence and power? And how did it get that way?

There are four prime reasons for its present stature: (1) training and influence, (2) discipline and organization, (3) flaming faith in its own patriotism and program and (4) ruthless determination for power and the force of arms to back it up.

Added to this is another motive increasingly more important—fear. Army officers are afraid of what might happen to them if they let go the reins and allow a truly democratic government to take over. Most officers think they would not only lose their benefits and promotions if they left the ministries for the barracks, but that they might also face strong public reprisals.

Despite Perón's role and its traditional place in Argentine activities, the Army itself is neither a *caudillo*-led force nor a personal dictatorship. Rather, it is a group in which a careerist military clique dominates; a clique which at times appears to give orders to Perón and at other times to take his command. The clique is like the secret police in that it survives upsets and at all times remains in power, despite changes of names and official forces in the halls of government.

Army officers like to believe Argentines hold them in the highest regard and that this gives them a kind of continuous mandate permitting them to act as the highest court on political and other issues. They also believe they have the right and the duty to take over when they feel the civilian administration has failed.

Up until June, 1943, Argentina's Army had usually been content to reflect the thinking of a handful of rich *estancieros*. Upsets occurred only when they thought it convenient. But in 1943, the younger officers became exasperated and decided to take over themselves.

Most were members of a secret lodge known as the G.O.U. (Grupo Oficiales Unidos) which included an important majority of the 6,000 officers who commanded an Army of approximately 100,000. Members of the G.O.U. were strongly and militantly nationalist, though scorning extremist organizations such as the Alianza Libertadora Nacional, which in those days had strong Nazi and Spanish Falangist support. Both G.O.U. and officers' cadre were in many ways the product of Prussian training and influence which made them a kind of permanent caste in the body politic.

The Argentine Navy, numbering some 40,000 men with an officer corps of about 4,500, was also an important force. But it has never been as political as the Army. For a long time the Navy had only one officer in the military cabinet. Even now, naval officers frequently give the impression that they wish they had never entered into the business of running the state. One high-ranking Navy man explained: "We have gained little but ill will and the reputation of being subservient to the Army."

Many Air Force men were strongly pro-Perón. They felt that something was needed to arouse the more traditional ground Army officers and believed Perón was the one to do it.

Very few of Argentina's smartly uniformed, sword-wearing Army officers come from the wealthiest class. There is a sprinkling of old *estancia* family names in the

Army rosters, but it has never been a rich man's career. Most leaders are from the ambitious middle-class families—Spanish, Italian, German, Irish. This is the same strata from which the democratic opposition also stems, a unique factor in more ways than one.

The intensity with which they pursue their careers has long distinguished the thinking, action, and tradition of Argentina's Army officer group. This characteristic can be noted among the cadets entering the Colegio Militar, Argentina's West Point, and in the officers who have spent their whole lives in service.

The cadet or officer who is unwilling to subjugate all else to his career rarely lasts long. Argentina's militarists have felt a pride in staying apart from the civilian population.

No outsider, reservist, or non-career man has ever risen to a top rank in Argentina. There is no Argentine officer comparable to General George C. Marshall, who went to Virginia Military Institute instead of West Point. Moreover, since the permanent officers corps, not Congressmen, pass on cadet admissions to the Colegio, the type has become almost self-perpetuating.

Cadets have no soft training. The discipline is especially rigid when contrasted with university laxity. The four-year course and the years which follow leave an imprint far deeper than that of West Point, Sandhurst, or St. Cyr. Right from the start, cadets are taught such rules as assuming a poker face while on duty, the strict code of honor for every detail of an officer's life, and the right of an officer to command unquestioning respect from the conscripts who make up the force. Cadets have conscript orderlies. Friendly yet respectful relationships between

officers and G.I.'s such as have recently been encouraged by our top brass would never be permitted in Argentina.

Even the history taught at the Colegio was different from that previously studied at the universities. Army men, in fact, felt the civilian version so far out of line that one of the first things they did on obtaining power was to order many textbooks rewritten. They also banned certain radio programs including one sponsored by a United States businessman's group, which re-created dialogue to dramatize historic events not in strictest accord with the Army's version.

Emphasis at the Colegio has always been on campaigns, tactics, field maneuvers. The first heel-clicking Prussian instructor came to Argentina in 1912 to reorganize the army: he was followed by a number of others who taught German methods. The Nazis, who aimed to create a powerful Argentine military group in their own image, invited many young officers to Berlin to observe their new tanks and planes. One of their guests was Juan D. Perón.

Their efforts did much to develop the officers' cadre that moved, not on orders of Berlin, as some melodramatic observers reported, but on the basis of a shared philosophy, tradition, and belief; a lack of faith in democracy and its "trappings,"—freedom of speech, press, and elections. Army officers would act just as the Germans wanted without requiring anything as direct as an order.

This basic philosophy helped bring on Argentina's 1930 military coup, first since 1890. Quickly organized by General Uriburu, it was first cheered, then booed, by Argentines who found promises to rout out corruption as meaningless then as they did a decade later.

The G.O.U. was born not long afterwards. Its chief force came from the colonels' level. Under Argentina's Army organization, these were the men in the most strategic positions, the highest ranking officers in direct contact with the troops. They taught the conscripts the principle of respect for authority, personal loyalty, belief in the duty of the military to act as guardians of the people, and the need to "give Argentina her place in the sun."

Argentina's conscripts have always come from the poorest, least-educated class. In the past every able-bodied male had to report with his age class. About one name in every ten was drawn to fill the ranks. In practice, however, young men of wealth or education rarely entered as privates. Students were exempted if they took a three-month, part-time marksmanship course. University students, as a result, became the Army's traditional enemies because they had rarely served, or served reluctantly.

In the first months of military rule in 1943, Argentines were left breathless with the succession of decrees designed to repair errors of speech, morals, finance, agriculture, and political opinion. Army officers ran the nation as they had their corps, attending to every detail of national life. When they saw food costs were high, for example, they simply "solved" the inflation problem by ordering grocers to slash prices. Argentines noted how, when public problems refused to be so easily solved by military regulations, their Army officers were upset, uneasy, and uncertain what to do next.

Ambitious Colonel Perón sold himself to his fellow officers as the man with the answers. He saw from the

beginning that he needed the help of many other Army officers. As President, he gave provincial governorships to colonels and generals.

Many obscure officers named to head departments put families on the payroll and spent money in unlimited quantities. Figures, of course, were never made public, and no one in Argentina dreams of a congressional probe. In addition, Perón sought to win Army favor by having Congress grant pay increases. He also had Congress give non-commissioned officers the right to vote, a privilege the Army had traditionally denied itself to "make sure it would be a disinterested party in all national conflicts."

Aside from the feeling that they had a mandate to take over from the "unscrupulous politicians" and provide the "discipline which the people obviously needed," Argentina's Army officers had other reasons for wanting to remove the civilian government of Ramón S. Castillo.

Some were anxious to repair their own damaged professional prestige. They also sought to give the Army arms equality with their biggest neighbor, Brazil, who had received strengthening Lend-Lease aid from the United States.

Not that they expected war. Argentina's seventy-five-year record of peace and her settlement of at least three thorny boundary disputes by arbitration pretty well precluded this. Argentina had even ceded territory to which it had a good claim and served as an arbitrator for others in boundary differences to avoid armed conflicts.

But Argentine Army officers said they did not want to have to depend on the United States to defend them in the event of a U.S.-Russian war which they definitely

expected. The desire to be self-sufficient in the event of war provided the basic thinking beneath the five-year plan and the industrialization of the nation. Like the Nationalists, their slogan was, "Sovereignty above all else." Other militarists also dreamed of creating a country in which the individual served the State—not the State the individual. Their program was one of social justice somewhat related to the social approach Perón later developed.

Argentina's Army has been on a war basis, or its equivalent, since June, 1943. The Armed Forces have received at least a quarter of the national budget, perhaps more. Only part is published. Not listed is atomic research in which Perón has recently claimed important advances, some of which he said were based on discovery of a vein of uranium-bearing ore near Mendoza. Experiments are reportedly made at the super-secret atomic "pilot plant" on an island in Lake Nahuel Huapí.

Perón has also stated that war is an "inevitable social phenomenon, requiring long conscientious years of preparation, and accomplishable only through the combined efforts of Government, private institutions, and all the people." The problems, he has added, "are so diverse and require such technical skills that no capacity or intellect can be dispensed with."

In an attempt to develop public interest in the Army, Perón often wears his general's uniform, appears at parades and demonstrations, speaks in favor of many Army ideals. Though hardly a popular Army, it must be admitted that many Argentines love the polished show of strength put on by their armed forces.

Another step in Perón's aim to develop a public con-

sciousness in the Armed Forces has been the drive to deify Argentina's Washington, General José de San Martín, as the country's outstanding national hero. San Martín's military record is stressed and his name has become a rallying cry for chauvinism. There are many reasons. For one, it helps keep down factionalism, especially important at this time. It spurs greater efforts at a moment when Argentina must produce more, as imports are reduced and exports cut. And it brings Argentines closer together in the face of economic difficulties and criticisms from abroad.

In *Latin American Politics and Government*, Austin F. MacDonald answers the questions of many North Americans who overlook the importance of Latin American armies. "‘Why,’ they ask, ‘do the Latins permit their dictators to continue in power? Why don't they do something about it?’ To ‘do something’ about a machine gun when you happen to be on the wrong end, is not easy. It takes a special brand of courage and perhaps a large degree of foolhardiness. So the dictators continue to dictate with Army support. Even Latin presidents who are confirmed democrats have no illusions as to their sources of power." In the past, Argentina's Army officers always knew that a couple of regiments marching from the city's outskirts to the downtown Plazo de Mayo were enough to bring about a change in government, the removal of a cabinet minister, a new bill. Since this could be done within a matter of hours, the threat was often more implied than real. So every Argentine President, as well as the leaders of other Latin countries, have tried to keep the Army united in their behalf.

Perón, as an Army man himself, has been especially

aware of this. His device, and skill, has been to make the Army subservient to him, rather than the other way round.

No one can say with certainty just how much of the Argentine Army currently supports Perón at any given time. Rumors—and in no other Latin capital do they spread as quickly as in Buenos Aires—constantly tell of dissatisfaction and planned counter-moves. “Wait around,” old timers tell a newcomer, “you will see something big next week.” The big event may be postponed for months or years, and the insiders are often as surprised as anyone at what finally happens. The situation in Argentina always appears to be touch-and-go, for, as disagreement develops, Army loyalty makes officers think of their quarrel as a family affair and decide that they have to stick together and hold on by force if necessary.

President Perón’s greatest military interest has, not unnaturally, been in the Army’s seat of power, the Campo de Mayo barracks on the outskirts of the federal capital. Here, sitting like a giant cannon aimed at the heart of Buenos Aires, are not only the leading infantry, artillery, anti-aircraft and cavalry groups, but the School of Arms, Communications and Non-Commissioned Officers. Some ten thousand men are permanently based here and the shifting population is always large.

It was from Campo de Mayo that the Army marched to take over the government in 1943. In 1945, Campo de Mayo officers turned against Perón, and forced him to resign for several days. While they wrangled over what to do next, Perón came back. On September 28, 1951, Campo de Mayo was the center of a brief military revolt

against Perón. It was later described as one of the least successful attempts ever made.

To make sure that his own followers are in this and other strategic bases, Perón and those closest to him have constantly moved men and officers. They have established garrisons in every province and territory instead of the six or seven previously covered. Divisions of these officers in whom Perón has confidence get weapons and arms. Others whose loyalty is in the slightest doubt get one or two bullets per rifle and no heavy arms.

The Army's two principal bones of contention with Perón were his wife and his one-time economic czar Miguel Miranda. Miranda is now dead and hence is no longer an active issue. And Señora Perón's star dimmed beginning with the fatal illness which developed in the fall of 1951.

The officers' opposition to her was strong from the start. Most of them had never been able to stand the idea of a woman having so much influence in running the country. Army officials shuddered in August, 1951, when the cheering *descamisados* begged Evita to run for the Vice Presidency. "If anything ever happened to Perón," they said, "she would be our Commander-in-Chief!" Their rumblings echoed in the Casa Rosada, and Evita tearfully told her people she could not run for the office.

To develop his own strength Perón has encouraged the natural rivalry of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. "So long as their surplus energies are used up in fighting one another," he reportedly has said, "they won't have the strength to bother me much."

As an overgrown police force with a reactionary out-

look, the Army was long disliked by organized labor. Workers also heartily disliked the Federal Police of Buenos Aires, who at one time were per capita almost twice as numerous as those of New York City. With Perón in power the Federal Police have been militarized more and more and have in effect become an army in themselves, a possible adjunct or rival, to the regular forces.

Army officers, moreover, have been pleased at the reflected glory they received from those who favored Perón's policy. They also realized that while labor was not an armed force, it was well organized. Labor leaders have been able to summon up tremendous numbers of fanatical followers and, by stopping work, paralyze all activity for indefinite periods. Army officers still feel that no one else in Argentina has the President's strength, so it might be best to string along for a while longer.

Most observers believe if the Army ever revolts against Perón, the leaders will be young officers who have the most to gain and the least to lose. The question of whether or not Argentina's Army conscripts would battle against organized labor in the event of a real showdown is often debated. Some believe the resultant bloodshed could plunge the country into such chaos that it would be difficult to continue any kind of normal activity. Army officers, like most other Argentines, are in no great hurry to force a physical battle and prefer a more comfortable method of waiting it out.

For his part Perón is known to count on the support of the Ministry of National Defense, headed by General Humberto Sosa Molina, a very fine Army officer dedicated to the interests of his country. The Ministry, created in

1949, has jurisdiction over key civilian defense agencies as well as the Army, Air Force, and Navy. Some observers believe it lacks strength and have likened it to the fourth side of a triangle.

General Molina, a good friend of President Perón, has had many contacts with the United States and its representatives. In late 1947 he was host to Lieutenant General Willis D. Crittenger, the first top-rank United States officer to see Argentina's military installations and training establishments since the end of the war. In May, 1948, General Molina journeyed to the United States where he was a White House guest and received many attentions. He returned to Argentina with a very friendly attitude toward Washington.

Our own government has not neglected to seek friendship with the Argentine military. Since 1939 we have sent ground and air missions to the country to help to instruct Argentines in our military organization and tactics. During the war and until 1947 we refused to sell arms to Argentina because of Axis influence there. Since then there have been many friendly military visits, and Argentine officers have added the study of English to their curriculum.

The Argentines and Their Neighbors

TO SEAL the friendship pact signed by Chile and Argentina after the settlement of a bitter border dispute in 1902, a massive statue was erected in the Uspallata Pass—a Christ of the Andes with arms outstretched in blessing. According to the favorite Latin story, a stranger, sighting the monumental figure high in the mountains between the two countries, asked why it faced Argentina rather than Chile.

“That’s easy,” a Chilean replied. “Not even the Lord could trust turning his back on the Argentines.”

The tale sharply illustrates the underlying uneasiness existing between the people of Argentina and one of her five closest “good neighbors.” To a greater or lesser degree, a similar attitude persists toward the others—Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil. Despite official

Good Neighbor talk and an unwritten rule against discussion in print, most Latin countries are jumpy about the powerful republic next door, and fearful of some incident which might turn a border encounter into a more serious matter.

One of the greatest mistakes North Americans make about Argentina is to assume that peronistas are the only Argentines who want to dominate the rest of Latin America. Argentina's Army officers have made the most of it, hence, attention centers on them. But the fact is that most Argentines firmly believe their country is Latin America's natural leader, and whether they discuss it or not, they are apt to look down on other Latins and feel they should be leading what they consider the more backward republics. This is true of both *porteños* and provincials who may have rarely encountered a Paraguayan or a Brazilian. The *porteños*, perhaps, feel this superiority most: the citizens of Mendoza, closest to the Chilean border, next. The feeling diminishes up in the Bolivian and Paraguayan regions where poorer Argentines are less power-conscious. Like the Argentines' pride, the desire for leadership, however, generally applies to all classes.

Because of this widespread and deep-seated feeling most Argentines have cheered the frequent speeches of Perón and government officials which stress the role they must play in leading Latin America. Some of these pronouncements are mild; others, saber-rattling. The latter get a great press play. Several officials have stated that Argentina must eventually absorb not only parts of Chile, but Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Southern Brazil. This is an extension of a well-worn dream of an Austral

Bloc, based on the old viceroyalty of the Rio de La Plata which included Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Argentina. Other Latins became aware of it about 1889 when Argentines demonstrated their pride in their growing population and power at the first International Conference of the American States in Washington. In the days before World War II, Nazi leaders echoed the same idea to Argentine Army officers—promising that, when the Germans won, Argentina would be permitted to dominate all of Southern South America, and thus circumvent United States aspirations. When aggressive speeches voicing this Pan Argentine idea cause an upheaval in neighboring capitals, Argentine officials quickly explain they are “purely for local consumption,” just as they do with anti-United States pronouncements.

For a time, many Argentines themselves felt that Perón had inspired a number of the military coups in other South American countries. He was credited—or blamed—for new military governments whether or not he had anything to do with them. Though facts on which to base conclusions are slim there is little doubt that many such reports have been greatly exaggerated. To many Argentines, the idea of their aggressive designs on their neighbors is as ridiculous as our planning action against Canada. Yet many Chileans and Uruguayans feared that Perón's attitude, particularly in the days when he was rising rapidly, might someday mean their end—even though they did not know exactly how, or why, he might want to take them over.

On the other hand, many Argentines who approve of their country's leadership resented only the fact that Perón was the one taking the lead.

Argentina's interest in its neighbors has been intensified since the initiation of the Good Neighbor Policy. When war cut off European and Far Eastern trade, Argentina and other Latin countries were more or less forced to cooperate with one another. As a result, Buenos Aires in recent years increased rail contacts with her nearest neighbors and set up and extended inter-continental steamship and air routes.

To implement these she also sought a series of economic treaties with Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia, and other Latin countries. News that these broad agreements would abolish customs barriers, provide trade, and bring about investments of considerable Argentine funds for the development of mineral and other resources required for their country's new industrial program at first delighted most Argentines. It sounded good. It gave them the feeling that their country was growing and finding her place in the sun.

Peronistas conveniently ignored the fact that such agreements would form an Argentine-dominated economic bloc much like those Argentina had always accused the British and the United States of creating to keep smaller countries as their colonial affiliates and raw-material-producing satellites.

In 1951 and 1952, Argentina, faced by her own economic difficulties, began to change the approach. In the column he purportedly writes under the name of "Descartes" in the newspaper *Democracia* Perón suggested the prompt establishment of a confederation of Latin American states. His viewpoint, which appealed to many Argentines, was that the Third World War already was a fact, that the final decision "will be a long and painful

matter for Russia as well as the United States—most probably decided more by progressive destruction and exhaustion rather than through violent military action.”

President Perón declared that though Argentina could not avert this, she could “be able to offer to the peoples, innocent victims of the madness of their own rulers, timely aid when the disappointed and hungry decide to seek a better life in a less selfish, freer and happier mankind.” Reduced to more practical terms this developed into a program to induce other Latin American countries to form their own pool of strategic materials and fix their own price for these so that they would not have to deal in scarce dollars or through the United States.

The President in effect threatened to use his country’s food exports—when these materialized again—as “critical materials,” a classification already given to meat. What he was most interested in, it became clear, was getting what his country needed, like steel, tin plate, war equipment, and machinery. For example, one deal was made with neighboring Chile whereby Argentina sent one hundred thousand cattle on the hoof through the Andean passes in return for fifteen thousand tons of copper.

The British were also warned that sterling prices, no matter how high, would not be deemed sufficient in the next beef contract. The British were told, in effect, that they would have to deliver oil, steel, coal, and tin plate whether these items were in trans-Atlantic short supply or not.

President Perón hoped through this program to win the results he had not been able to obtain by earlier treaties. The fact is that in most of the previous treaties little was said of the fact that they were generally opera-

tive only under certain conditions and many of the glowing promises simply never materialized.

Moreover, currently Argentina cannot afford to help her neighbors develop their resources as she suggested just after World War II.

Despite their desire to dominate the hemisphere, most Argentines are not tremendously interested in the day-to-day affairs of the republics across their borders. Most newspapers carry comparatively little news about what is going on in Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, and Uruguay, especially in contrast to the columns they print about the United States and the rest of the world.

What are relations with the other South American countries as most Argentines see them?

Chile shares with Argentina her longest border—some 2,600 miles strung from peak to peak in the high Andes. Unlike the U.S.-Canadian border, which is roughly twice its length, the Argentine-Chilean boundary is by no means unguarded. Chileans are painfully conscious of Argentine armed camps extending south down to Patagonia. They know they are not as strong as they were in the late nineteenth century when they served an ultimatum on Argentina, demanding boundary concessions. They were then ready to fight, but peace was achieved and the Christ of the Andes statue erected and eloquently inscribed: "These great mountains will crumble before our two nations ever make war upon each other."

The average Argentine is likely to think of Chile in mixed terms. He gallantly professes admiration for the beauty of her *señoritas* who, he reluctantly admits, are more attractive than most other Latin-American women. He is aware Chile's population—5,537,000 by the coun-

try's own 1947 official count—has not grown as fast as Argentina's. He is familiar with the superiority of Chilean wine, which sells at a premium in Argentina. He knows personally, or from friends, of the *simpatico* atmosphere of Viña del Mar, the lovely Pacific seaside resort which was especially popular with Argentines during those years when their money could be favorably exchanged with the Chilean.

Official relations, however, hardly reflect these notions. In fact, they have cooled considerably since Perón's early days in the Casa Rosada. After *La Prensa* became an official government organ, it began a series of attacks on Chile as a "backward nation." Her President, Gabriel González Videla, was described as a "tool in the hands of Washington and Wall Street." He was warned against "making deals with foreign economic imperialists," negotiations displeasing to Perón's Foreign Ministry.

Argentines, always short of minerals, want regular supplies of Chilean coal, copper, and steel. Once Chile was ready to make these available. Now she wants to use them for her own ambitious industrial program.

Democratic Chileans have also been annoyed by the favorable attitude of the official Argentine press for General Carlos Ibáñez, the former dictator-president re-elected in 1952. During Perón's visit in February, 1953, they gave him an extremely cool reception.

Ibáñez supporters denied charges that their candidate was hand-picked by Perón, but in Buenos Aires a labor group formed a pro-Ibáñez organization and gave it headquarters in a building formerly owned by *La Prensa*. In July, 1952, Santiago formally accused Argentina of en-

gaging in an "excessively offensive" propaganda campaign against Chile.

In the disputed land of the Antarctic, Chileans have twitted Argentine ambitions. They insist that their territorial rights include a pie-slice segment of the region below both their own and Argentina's border. Britain, Argentina, and Chile have claimed various islands and land in Antarctica for years. In 1947, Argentina set up a weather post on Deception Island in the South Shetlands. Chile set up posts on Greenwich Island nearby, and on Graham Land, which they call O'Higgins Land in honor of their national hero. In March, 1948, González Videla dashed down to the Antarctic region to take possession of the territory. In recent years, Chile and Argentina have put aside their differences in Antarctica to present a united front against Britain. Though frozen wasteland does not seem terribly important, Chileans make much of their claim because, as many Chileans explain: "It was our way of showing some kind of superiority over Argentina." It is important to keep in mind that there is a definite Argentine-Chilean rivalry for the oil in southern Tierra del Fuego.

For years, Argentine official policy was predicated on a possible Chilean-Bolivian combination and on the fact that Chile dominated Bolivia before Argentina herself became the chief foreign influence in that mountain-ringed, landlocked country.

Argentines recognize Bolivia's wealth of tin, silver, and petroleum. They sympathize with their government's efforts to get Bolivia to ship her products through Argentina, rather than over the Andes to the port of Arica in

Chile. This would put Bolivia's major export trade under Argentine control—and ensure Argentina's first claim to their usage.

Bolivia's illiterate population, her weak leadership, and great economic promise have long interested succeeding Argentine governments. In 1951, the peronista press began playing up the strenuous, if not overly successful, diplomatic moves toward implementing old agreements which would bring more Bolivian oil, tin, and other products to Argentina. As part of the drive, Argentine papers have also sought to make a big play of Bolivia's "gallant battle to obtain a fair price for her tin" from buyers in the United States.

One Argentine railroad connects with La Paz. Years ago the Argentine government undertook to finance another to Santa Cruz, but ran into difficulties. It is still abuilding, but their Brazilian rivals are going to beat them. Santa Cruz is also the goal of a new rail line from Santos and São Paulo, Brazil, which will stretch all the way across the continent to Arica, Chile.

Argentine oil men were keenly interested when, in 1937, Bolivia expropriated Standard Oil's fields in their country. Ever since then Argentines have been active in Bolivia's oil development, particularly through their Y.P.F. state oil trust.

President Perón has brought pressure on some unfriendly Bolivian governments though Argentines often jokingly wonder why. They say: "Since the regimes change so rapidly, you only have to wait a little while before the 'outs' themselves oust the 'ins.'" But since Bolivia imports 85 per cent of her wheat and half her meat from the Argentines, the government in La Paz

finds it difficult to resist Argentina. At one time Bolivians appealed to the United States to provide food in case Argentina should try to force acceptance of her terms by stopping all shipments. A partial agreement was subsequently reached, adopted by Bolivia's Congress, and the pressure lessened.

In April, 1952, stories circulated that Perón had armed the rebels who helped the Bolivian Nationalist Revolutionary Movement stage its successful *coup d'état*. Both the M.N.R. and Perón denied it. Victor Paz Estensoro flew back to La Paz from a six-year exile in Argentina to become President, and Evita's Foundation rushed plane-loads of foods and medicines to the stricken Bolivians. Buenos Aires recognized the new Paz Estensoro government, and during the six-week period before Washington did the same, the Buenos Aires press shouted that we were refusing to recognize Paz Estensoro as a reprisal for Bolivia's demand for a higher tin price—another example of our "imperialism."

Most Argentines know little and care less about Paraguay though their government completely dominates the little land-locked nation. Many Argentines consider it a primitive, remote land where 1,500,000 poor illiterate Guaraní Indians fight each other in constant civil wars. Those who have sailed up the Paraguay River have smiled smugly to see the clean towns, progressive farms, and white people on their own side of the river contrasted with the squalid primitive homes of the *mestizos* and Indians on the Paraguayan side.

Paraguay's main avenue of commerce is the Paraguay-Paraná river system, which flows for hundreds of miles through Argentine territory. Argentines own and operate

the steamship companies that connect Paraguay with the outside world.

The Argentine government also owns 75 per cent of the Paraguayan Central Railroad—the only railroad worth mentioning. And of course the rail outlet for Paraguay is through Argentina.

Much of Paraguay's wheat comes from Argentina as do almost all manufactured articles. Argentines own most of Paraguay's bakeries. They control the quebracho industry, and have a considerable stake in *yerba maté*. The Paraguayan *guaraní*, which is the unit of currency, is tied to the Argentine *peso*, and foreign exchange is obtained through Buenos Aires. The average Paraguayan regards Buenos Aires as the center of the universe. Their usually unstable governments are necessarily so amenable to every Argentine suggestion that, as Willard and Verna Smith explain in *Paraguayan Interlude*, Asunción has been described as "a branch office of Buenos Aires."

Paraguayans have long had to be content with this for there was little else they could do. As a debtor nation, owing Argentina on the \$16 millions or more she's invested (U.S. investment is supposed to be no more than \$5 millions; the British \$10 millions) Paraguay interests Argentina not only as a restraining wall against her bigger neighbor, Brazil, but as a fruitful field for her own economic expansion.

Though Argentines consider Paraguay economically weak, politically inept, and ruled by little cliques of braggart heroes who have constantly kept their masses ignorant, ill-fed, and sick, officially the Argentines have long been Paraguay's zealous friend. Their governments

faithfully supported her in the long bloody Chaco War with Bolivia and helped her seize the major gains from the Chaco peace. With British backing, the Argentines have built most of Paraguay's railroads and helped improve Paraguayan agriculture.

The major news Argentines get from Paraguay, however, is the not infrequent reports of political revolts. Rarely does a newspaper or a magazine attempt to provide any background or interpretation of the country. Few Argentine tourists ever travel here.

Brazil touches Argentina only in the narrow span between Uruguay and Paraguay. Yet the rivalry between the two countries is great—though it is essentially more psychological than economic.

The Argentines often look down on the Brazilians as occupants of a tropical land filled with palm trees, vast jungles, and strange snakes and multicolored birds. Brazilian Portuguese is close enough to Argentine Spanish so that an Argentine visitor can generally make himself understood with little difficulty.

Porteños say the Brazilian *samba* was never popular in Argentina until it was introduced by Carmen Miranda in Hollywood movies. The average Argentine admires the beauties of Rio. He knows the beaches at Copacabana are a charming place to go in the season, but he thinks Brazil's now closed casinos "could never compare" with his own Mar del Plata.

Brazilians profess to find the Argentines rude and uncultured. They often speak of what they call their "crude emphasis on material possessions" since most Argentines will unfavorably compare Brazil's smaller number of telephones, bathtubs, cars, and refrigerators, much in the

same way that we do in our appraisal of other countries.

Incidentally, as Argentines dislike most of the other Latin Americans, so most of them dislike her. The terms they employ in speaking of Argentines are likely to include "conceited" and "arrogant." They tell you they can spot an Argentine miles away, that when he leaves his country he brings Argentina with him.

Though there is often great official cordiality, Brazilians and Argentines have had many differences. Argentines feel superior because, they say, they are more advanced in both culture and material things.

This, however, has not interfered with Brazilian-Argentine commerce. In fact, trade with Brazil could be even greater if Argentina had more wheat to supply. Argentines buy considerable Brazilian coffee, fruits, and tropical products.

Many Brazilians resented Perón's supposedly undercover activity against their President, Gaspar Dutra (1945-51) despite the fact that Dutra was a military man. The methods Perón used to cut off wheat shipments during one crisis caused bread prices to rise and produced considerable worker unrest, and they have not quite been forgotten. Argentine-Brazilian relations warmed after Getulio Vargas, Dictator-President for fourteen years, resumed the Presidency in 1951.

Perón still has ideas of better relations with both Brazil and Chile. On December 20, 1951, writing as "Descartes," he called for a union of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile as "a means of survival in a third World War." The three countries individually could not reach economic greatness, he said. Federation would be the best means of

"living out the most colossal clash of our times between a united Asia and Europe and the United States."

He added that the Latin American countries were threatened by "new colonial forms of domination either by Communist assault or by economic penetration," and said it would be suicide not to work for confederation. Having expressed the idea, his article concluded: "Argentina is prepared, ready and willing."

Most significant, aside from the proposal itself, was the fact that it omitted Argentina's closest neighbor, Uruguay, for here is one country which many hundreds of thousands of Argentines really know and like. To *porteños*, seeing a friend off for Montevideo, Uruguay's capital, was no more exciting than watching a Staten Island ferry pull out, or seeing the Oakland boat heading for the trip across San Francisco Bay.

Every night at 10 P.M., down on their Dock Sud in Buenos Aires, whistles would blow, the gangplank go up, and the old-fashioned many-decked river boat tugged out to the muddy Río de la Plata for the overnight journey.

The Montevideo boats still run, but the journey is not the same any more. The lights strung out along the river embankment as one leaves Buenos Aires, and the traditional *toastados* and coffee served just before arrival the next morning, haven't changed in all the years. But the contrast between state-controlled Buenos Aires and free Montevideo is now sharp and dramatic.

Newspapers in Uruguay are far closer to ours in the way they tell the news. *La Mañana* is pro-government; *El Pais* is in opposition. But both say exactly what they please. You step into a Montevideo telephone booth, dial

a number, talk and hang up. Then, if you have just left Buenos Aires, you realize that there was no danger of the wire's being tapped. Baggage is inspected by customs authorities, but no books or magazines are seized as seditious, no letters scrutinized as dangerous, and no questions asked about family, friends, or religion.

Since 1943, hundreds of Argentines have found it expedient to take the night boat or the forty-five-minute plane ride to Montevideo to escape the police. Argentine exiles in the Uruguayan capital own an appropriately named bar, El Refugio, which is the first stop of many political fugitives. The most famous exile of 1951, Alberto Gainza Paz, publisher of *La Prensa*, went to his mother's *estancia* in Uruguay, when he had to flee.

For many years the only thing Argentines needed to travel to Uruguay was a *cedula*, or identification card. Many Argentines habitually spent their vacations at one of the many Uruguayan beaches which stretch eastward from Montevideo. Thousands of them owned chalets at lovely Punta del Este, the most famous resort. Many wealthy Argentine families invested in Uruguayan land and business—it is close to home, but out of reach of the Argentine government.

Argentines find a vacation in Uruguay as pleasant as we do a trip to Canada, even though the geographical differences between the two countries are hardly visible. The men and women in Montevideo and Buenos Aires look, dress, and outwardly behave pretty much the same. Out on the *estancias* life is similar to that on the other side of the Rio de la Plata. Even the gaucho tradition is similar.

But there is a great difference in attitudes. Argentines

aspire to dominance. Uruguayans know their country is small and make no effort to be more than they are. Some observers believe that because Argentina has always overshadowed her neighbor, Uruguayans have self-consciously declared their independence and expressed it in their individualism and democracy.

Uruguay owes its independence largely to the fact that neither Argentina nor Brazil is willing to see it become a part of the other. Perhaps because it has neither the men nor the resources to defend itself in a long struggle, it has always been a leader in plans for mutual defense within the hemisphere.

Unlike Argentina, Uruguay did not stay neutral during the war or later try to establish a "third position" between communism and capitalism. Uruguayan democrats speak up for their beliefs—and know they can count on our help if necessary. When Perón cut off wheat shipments to make Uruguayans vote for his favorite candidate in their election of 1946, the United States shipped thousands of tons of wheat to its spunky little South American friend. Perón's candidate lost.

Argentines know Uruguay as one of the few South American republics without racial or religious problems and with little clerical influence. It even renamed Christmas *Día de la Familia* (Family Day) so as not to offend anyone. Church and State have been kept strictly apart. "We feel both are vital to democracy, but only when each follows its own course," Uruguayans say.

Some Argentines think their nationalization program resembles the Uruguayans'. The Uruguayan government has a virtual monopoly of banking and insurance. It owns and operates the light and power plants and the tele-

phones. A government agency controls the state monopoly of cement, alcohol, and fuel. A national refrigeration plant has a monopoly on domestic meat, though several foreign companies maintain their own plants for export trade. The government owns and operates a number of hotels and casinos, and even one night club. It runs about a fourth of the country's railroad mileage.

But, Uruguayans point out, "The government does not run us, we run it." Businessmen and technicians, not politicians, administer the state services on orders to make them pay while giving cheap and efficient service. The state agencies use their profits for public benefit—Uruguay was a "welfare state" long before the term was invented. Its economy, based on meat, wool, and hides, is sturdy, and its currency strong. Uruguayans are secretly pleased as they watch visitors from rich, mighty Argentina struggle to stretch their shrinking Argentine *pesos* in Montevideo shops.

In December, 1951, *Newsweek* reported that Uruguay's only major foreign problem is Argentina. The purest democracy in the Western Hemisphere is temperamentally incompatible with the strong-arm rule of Perón. The scores of Argentine exiles who frequent Montevideo irritate the Argentine President, but Uruguayans are not afraid of their big, blustering neighbor. The peoples of the two countries are much alike, although the Italian influence is stronger in Argentina.

Though there have been many protests, Uruguayan newspapers continue to carry articles by Argentines who oppose the Perón government. Uruguayan radio stations broadcast these charges, and sometimes beam them back into Buenos Aires where they can easily be received on

regular wave lengths. The Uruguayan government has never interfered with the activities of Argentine exiles.

Elsewhere in the hemisphere, peronista diplomacy is active. After General Manuel Odria came into power in Peru, relations with Argentina grew stronger. Perón also has friends among the military rulers of Venezuela. Argentine embassies in every Latin capital circulate peronista propaganda under the diplomatic frank.

In almost every country Argentine labor representatives offer scholarships or trips to Argentina, distribute literature, speak before various groups, and constantly seek to sell the viewpoint that Perón is labor's friend and that labor will benefit by following his lead.

In February, 1952, peronistas organized a new Latin American Labor Confederation in Asuncion, Paraguay. It was patterned on Perón's "third position" between Communism and capitalism. Other hemisphere labor organizations had not unanimously welcomed Argentina's government-controlled unions so they formed their own international group.

The United States and the Argentine

A GROUP of well-dressed Argentine businessmen called on the head of a United States film company some years ago with a request. "It may seem ridiculous," they explained, "and you may want to turn us down. But we are in the men's furnishings business here in Buenos Aires, and the new Clark Gable film, *It Happened One Night*, is ruining our trade."

"How?" asked the movie man.

"Well, in one scene Gable takes off his shirt to go to bed—and he wears no undershirt. Now our young Argentines are refusing to buy undershirts and our business is being seriously affected!"

The movie man was first amused—then astonished. If one Made-In-Hollywood film could set such a trend, what might a whole series of pictures do?

His wondering was no idle musing, for films from the United States as well as our increasingly numerous books and magazines, cars and bathtubs, recordings and radio broadcasts, introduce Argentines to more than just notions about undershirts. Argentine morals and manners, ambitions and aspirations, outlook and perspective have all been affected by the strong winds from the North.

In the last two decades the influence of the United States in Argentina has increased tremendously. By this we mean influence in the widest sense. In part it is due to the decreasing role of Europe. Today, fewer well-to-do Argentines are visiting the Continent; fewer European books, films, and theatrical companies are coming to the Argentine. British influence has declined with the number of its investments. As the world grows smaller and Uncle Sam's role larger, every Latin-American country, even those which want to remain neutral, has become involved in foreign affairs.

Many Argentines do not relish our increasing influence, but more and more are beginning to realize it is an inescapable fact of life.

The influence of the United States is most obvious in the things Argentines use and do every day. Argentine women began to notice it when they bought products by Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein, and talked about them at home, at tea, at bridge, and at canasta, which, incidentally, came from the Rio de la Plata countries. At first only the wealthy ladies bought imported products. Today, these two firms alone do so much business in Argentina that both have established their own local manufacturing facilities. Almost every Argentine

woman, no matter how poor or remote from the big city, prefers United States lipsticks and lotions, make-up and eye shadow, thinking they give her added glamour.

Both soap and soap opera in Argentina have been conspicuously influenced by the United States. Palmolive manufactures both soap and cologne in Argentina. The firm's daily serial gave Evita Perón one of her early radio jobs. Pond's finds that Argentine society girls, who once would have avoided such publicity, are now just as happy as any of our debutantes to explain, in full-page advertisements, how they became lovely and engaged through using the well-known product.

The number of other products from the United States Argentines use every day is tremendous. Every Argentine knows the Ford, the "Cad-ill-jack" and the "Boo-icke," even though it is often hard for newcomers to discover that the latter mean Cadillac and Buick. Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler have their own assembly plants in Argentina, turning out the most popular models as well as trucks and busses. Since the end of the war such production has decreased and some plants diverted entirely to official production, but our cars are still far more popular than the less expensive British, Italian, and French makes.

The strange usage to which our trade names are sometimes put is another never-ending source of delight to North Americans and an unspoken indication of Argentine regard. A leading baggage house is called Pullman, a word which does not exist in Spanish. A smart shoe shop is named Larry, not the Spanish equivalent, which would be Lorenzo. A dress house is called Daisy, not Margarita. R.C.A.-Victor is known under its own name, but pro-

nounced in Argentine Spanish it sounds something like "Erra Sa Ah Veek-tor." Many homes, even in remote areas, boast their own "Sing-air" since so many Argentine women sew or have their clothes especially sewed for them.

Nylon has become a standard word to describe anything new, different, slightly miraculous—and probably made in the United States. Importation of nylon stockings, incidentally, was officially halted in 1951. They have become an important under-the-counter item and are constantly requested by every Argentine woman lucky enough to have friends in the United States.

Our influence, however, goes deeper than our washing machines and refrigerators, both of which are now coming to be accepted as a mark of a modern well-established Argentine urban family.

This influence shows in the desires, ambitions, and outlook of many Argentines, especially the younger generation. Their increasing informality of manners and customs stems in no small measure from the United States.

Our influence shows in the movies the Argentines prefer, the effect such films have on their daily lives, and their own desire to emulate the Hollywood model at least to some degree. It shows in the news and features they read, those from both the news services and syndicates—most of which are edited in the United States. It shows in the books, translated or original, in their shop windows and in their homes, in their advertisements, and the clothes and accessories they wear. Mostly, however, it appears in the realization on the part of more and more Argentines that this is the age of business and industrialization, of science and technology, of chemistry and

medicine, in all of which the United States is the leader.

The most direct United States influence possibly arises from the news which Argentines read every day. For many years no Argentine paper or popular magazine has been really pro-United States. *La Prensa*, when it was free, and *El Mundo* before it became an official organ of the government, were not unfriendly. Neither was *La Nacion*. At the same time, these papers could hardly be regarded as strongly pro-United States in the same sense that the British-controlled *Mundo* was pro-British. Yet Argentines could hardly ignore the very bulk of news dispatches from the United States.

For many years Argentina's leading news services were the United Press, Associated Press, and the International News Service. They appeared in scores of papers throughout the country, even those which were anti-United States. In the early days of World War II, for instance, the Nazi *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung* carried a United States wire service, with carbon copies filed to Berlin, until the paper was black-listed and the agency got an opportunity to break its contract. The United States press services were popular with editors and readers because their stories were less prejudiced. Our press services had extensive news-gathering and handling facilities, and too many new stories that could not be ignored originated in the United States.

United States wire service reports from Europe often beat French, British, and German services. They went beyond politics to record news of economics, science, art, music, and personalities. Editors Press Service, headed by Joshua Powers, provided *La Prensa* and other dailies with all kinds of syndicated columns, special features,

and cartoon strips. You could find advice to the lovelorn and health and beauty hints in many Argentine papers. "Jiggs and Maggie," "Winnie Winkle," "Flash Gordon," "Terry and the Pirates," in translation, were as familiar to Argentines as to fans here. Argentines have their own strips, like the mythical Indian "Patarazu," which was once syndicated in the United States, but it never had the following of "Donald Duck" or "Popeye," which in Argentina was called *Espinaca*, spinach. When *Espinaca* swallows a can of spinach to restore his strength, the howls of glee, Argentines say, can be heard in Patagonia.

The American correspondents working in Argentina represent such news agencies as United Press, Associated Press, and International News Service as well as individual newspapers including the *New York Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Daily News*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and others.

Censorship imposed by Argentine authorities has varied widely. At times anything filed for dispatch from Buenos Aires is blue-penciled to the extreme and at other times material could go out untouched. Everything depends on the situation prevailing at the moment. Sometimes stories are mailed to Montevideo to be wirelessly to home offices without censorship. Sometimes the mail is censored, sometimes it is not. Sometimes the correspondent's dispatch is seen in the United States by the Argentine Embassy in Washington and a protest is made. At other times even those stories most unfavorable to Argentina are ignored. In addition to the regular correspondents many visiting writers and editors came through Buenos Aires to observe and study conditions in Argentina. Some of them had long experience and their own

sources of information. Others, much to the annoyance of the Argentines, made hasty visits and wrote inaccurate and superficial articles.

Magazines from the United States used to be popular in Argentina, but censorship and the shortage of exchange have cut down the list to a few "technical" publications. *Time* has been banned off and on during recent years as have *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Life*, *Look*, *Business Week*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vision*, and others.

In view of the trouble United States news services and magazines have had in getting into the country, the material supplied by our Embassy Information Service has become increasingly important. It supplies Argentine papers with objective stories and texts of important speeches and State Department policy statements free of charge. Small daily and weekly papers often use the Service to supplement commercial sources.

The Information Service was preceded early in the war by the Asociación de Difusión Interamericana. Established by a number of United States businessmen, when Argentina was officially "neutral," the A.D.I. had to insist it was purely cultural. Now the Information Service functions as a regular Embassy department, though it operates from separate headquarters.

The Service maintains an extensive 16-mm and 35-mm motion picture distribution system both in Buenos Aires and interior cities. Operators take mobile truck units into rural areas for showings, frequently in schools and institutions. Boastful, extravagant, overly dramatic films are no longer used. Instead, programs include pictures of our

industry and schools, our cities and towns, our industrial and social developments.

Argentines especially like a film which tells of a trip on a Greyhound bus. They say such a film gives them a much better idea of the United States than a straight Hollywood epic offering little background or explanation. "We see ourselves in the role of travelers," they say. They also like March of Time movies, narrated in Spanish. These appear not only in commercial theaters but in re-runs by the Information Services.

The Lincoln Library, another Information Service function, has also taken several unusual steps to make the United States better known to Argentines. Instead of locating on an obscure side street in Buenos Aires, it occupies a large first floor shop near Plaza San Martín right in the heart of Calle Florida's most exclusive shopping section. The Library's large plate glass show window displays posters about news and information pictures as well as the latest books in English.

Argentine crowds not only look at the window displays, but come in by the score to browse, study, and borrow books. Most lending libraries with new foreign books charge regular fees like our renting libraries. By making books available without charge or deposit, the Lincoln Library attracts not only secondary-school and university students who can read English and are interested in a wide variety of subjects, but older Argentines as well. The Library carries publications both friendly and unfriendly to the United States.

Early in the morning of July 9, 1952, a bomb shattered the front of the Library. Next day, despite hammering

repairmen, hundreds of Argentines visited the building to use its services.

Some Argentine friends of the United States are interested in us because of their desire to trade and carry on business. Argentine industrialists admire our machines, our motors, and our marketing methods. They want more of them. They are the people who come in contact with the suppliers of such items. They may have made trips to the United States. Generally they like our way of operating. This group feels the pinch whenever export and import controls are imposed and constantly seek better official relations.

Some idea of their current commercial stake is shown in Argentina's exports to the United States, which in 1951 was \$216.2 million dollars or 1,183,000,000 *pesos*, of which wool sales comprised half. Argentina's imports from the States during that year came to \$230.8 millions of dollars.

Argentine commercial agents, who import and distribute United States products and sell Argentine products to us, are also likely to be pro-United States. So are the students who read and hear a great deal about us, and the Argentines who come to the States for visits or for medical treatment. At the Panagra offices, fares to Rochester, Minnesota, have been computed and posted because Argentines ask how much it costs to go to the Mayo Clinic almost as frequently as they want to know the fares to New York and Washington.

These Argentines who know the United States Chamber of Commerce in Argentina and its operations, who patronize the United States banks, and who have lunched at the American Club in Buenos Aires have become most

friendly to Americans. It was Argentines such as these who put on warm demonstrations of welcome to our sailors during the visits of United States vessels.

In fact, pro-United States Argentines sometimes get so enthusiastic about our country as a miracle land that they embarrass patriotic but realistic North Americans.

Said one observer: "If I could bring eighteen million Argentines to the States, I'm sure fifteen million would return home enchanted with us. The most successful selling job we can do in Argentina, therefore, is to offer substitutes for this hard-to-arrange, expensive trip to our country. It does pay off."

The Instituto Cultural Argentino-Norteamericano, with headquarters in Buenos Aires and several interior branches, is one of the agencies which also tries to provide Argentines with an accurate picture of the United States. Many Argentines study English at the privately-supported, unofficial Instituto, participate in its plays for language practice, or stop in to listen to records, hear an occasional visiting speaker, or attend a special party on an American holiday.

Another pro-United States rallying point is the Club Universitaria Argentina Norteamericano. Its members include some 823 of the 1,500-odd Argentines who have spent four years in universities in the United States. They come from all political groups. Some were government-sponsored students, now official technical advisors. Others are sons and daughters of well-to-do Argentine families who chose American schools because of their interest in the United States or because it is now difficult to send their children to Europe and they want to give them the best education available.

A leader of the Club Universitaria is an unusual chemist, Casimir Lanús Sarrata. He left his native Spain because of opposition to Franco. Later he started a business of his own, Dana Perfumes, now highly successful both in the United States and Argentina. He has developed an enthusiasm for the United States more vital—and effective—than that of any *Yanqui*.

Some Argentines dislike us for purely personal reasons. Others nurse strong political bias. Still more follow the varying official attitude. Some government people told us we should not become alarmed by the President's anti-*Yanqui* speeches because "Perón's campaigns to whip up hatred are intended for domestic consumption." Yet the very fact that they are stirred up means that they must affect at least some Argentines or they would not continue to be so essential a part of the official program.

More and more North Americans who go to the Argentine are genuinely interested in the country. They are disturbed about political conditions, partly because unrest affects their own business, partly because they hate to see democracy losing ground. However, most of them have learned to hold their tongues in front of Argentines. More and more Americans are being invited into Argentine homes. They have come to understand what first appears to be Argentine coldness and keep trying even if rebuffed.

The personal reasons why so many individual Argentines dislike us are important, but the organized opposition to the United States is far more significant and far more serious. It finds its most vehement expression in the nationalist groups. From 1950 on attacks on the United States have been growing more and more bitter.

By the spring of 1952 all newspapers—they were, of course, all official organs—were engaged in a concerted attack on the United States. One of the most venomous examples of the official condemnation of our country was carried on posters used during the 1951 election campaign. These posters made the statement that the citizens of the United States were “thieves and robbers whose only national interest is domination, and who should leave the country.”

I went to the Argentine in August, 1947. I had no prejudices, and I was under instructions from President Truman and Secretary of State Marshall to be as friendly as possible with the Argentines. Although I was familiar with a number of Latin-American countries, it was my first trip to the Rio de la Plata. I had no preconceived ideas about what I expected the Argentines to do or what kind of people they would be.

Because the journey was hurried, I could only take hand baggage. The first calls on the President are always made in formal clothes. I did not have formal clothes, but Guy Ray, the Embassy's Chargé d'Affaires, was easily able to secure them for me. Argentina is extremely protocol-conscious, so the Embassy had its own favorite rental agency for borrowing exactly the correct clothes. Thanks to this agency I was able to appear properly dressed. It is customary for an Ambassador presenting his credentials to make some formal remarks written, of course, by Embassy people trained in exactly the proper formal thing to say. After presenting my credentials and shaking hands with the Cabinet members, I said to President Perón: “You and I are both practical fellows. I think you have heard everything in my speech before. So, per-

haps instead of reading it to Your Excellency and keeping your Cabinet standing, you might like to have me just give it to you so that we will have time to talk about more important things."

He smiled. "That's good. Let's go into my private office and talk." We did, for more than an hour. We covered a score of issues and established an atmosphere of friendly association and mutual confidence.

Subsequently, I traveled to every part of the country—north to the Chaco, and south to the tip of Tierra del Fuego. Often I flew in a small Embassy plane with General Caldwell, our Military Attaché, and Colonel Donovan. Our trips ranged far into the interior. I had unlimited opportunity to get to know Argentines who did not live in the capital—and, in turn, to let them know a United States ambassador.

Travel is one part of an ambassador's assignment, but he has other tasks as well. He has to conduct official business with as little inconvenience or disturbance as possible. He has to keep Washington informed and to carry out Presidential and State Department instructions. He should also strengthen contacts with government officials and with local leaders of art, literature, and science.

Our government keeps a sharp watch of Argentina's economic activities. The agricultural attaché, or one of his assistants, visits every part of the country to obtain information on cattle production, grains, cereals, and a host of related products. Obviously, this is no mere idle curiosity. This information enables us to determine how our own products will fare on world markets. The planting schedules for thousands of our farmers and the food

requirements of European countries are dependent on both the the United States and Argentina.

If our agricultural attaché were to base his reports on statistical information alone, he certainly would not get the most accurate results possible. He must be friendly with the heads of agricultural societies, and with key *estancieros*, and officials in government agencies who are willing to talk privately about things that do not always go into official reports. He also needs to keep in contact with all kinds of people to get accurate, up-to-the-minute information. Grain figures, for example, were often late or overly optimistic. However, watching rail shipments provided a measuring rod much like the index of commercial activity supplied by our own boxcar loading figures.

Our military, minerals, oil, political, and other attachés all operate in their own individual ways, some methodically, some with the kind of rare insight and understanding which makes them real authorities and invaluable to the ambassador.

The system is extremely businesslike, but with a necessary diplomatic touch. A businessman who becomes an ambassador, therefore, does not find himself in a completely strange world. Often, in fact, an ambassador from outside the diplomatic orbit is able to cut through conventional patterns, while still utilizing to the fullest the experience of the career men who form his staff.

Official Embassy reports are drafted by specialists, then they go through regular routines established by the State Department to insure uniformity in its activities around the world. Some are coded for cables and radio-

grams, others sent by diplomatic pouch. Couriers carry the most vital pouches strapped to their wrists as they fly across the hemisphere. Contents of the pouches are considered untouchable because if opened by foreigners they might cause a break in diplomatic relations.

Another vital phase of an ambassador's assignment is to make certain he does everything possible to facilitate the work of the press correspondents from his own country. Only then can they do the best job possible in keeping readers at home informed. I no sooner arrived in Buenos Aires than several American correspondents came to see me asking what my attitude would be toward their activities. I told them they were assured of fullest cooperation. After several days, they returned. They said that they had met and had drawn up a plan for a weekly press conference. I limited this conference to American citizens representing recognized publications. Throughout my stay in the Argentine, my relations with the American press corps was most cordial. I found the correspondents did a truly admirable job in reporting the facts as they saw them.

Relations with American businessmen resident in the country are also a vital part of an ambassador's assignment. When I first came down many of these men, numbering four thousand with their families, were uncertain where they stood regarding imports, exports, labor, financial, and other problems. Explaining that I lacked their familiarity with local conditions, I urged them to get together and draw up a program that would further United States-Argentine commercial relations. "If I can accept it without reservation," I said, "I will do everything possible to put it through." Such a plan was developed and

cooperation was improved, even though obviously every objective we sought to accomplish could not be realized.

In addition to reporting and analyzing for Washington what goes on in the country to which he is accredited, the job of an ambassador is to promote his own country's interests and to present its point of view as effectively as possible. In order to deal with such agencies as the Foreign Ministry and the important government offices it is necessary to follow a special kind of official routine. Many Argentine officials, for example, do not even appear in their offices until 11 A.M. They stay until 1:00. Then they go to a large lunch followed by a *siesta*. The hardest work of the day often begins around 4:30 in the afternoon. Appointments with high government officials are usually made between 5:00 and 7:00 P.M., a time when most North American men would like to be finishing a game of golf, returning from the office, or winding up their day's activities.

There are so many mistaken ideas about an Ambassador's social life that some details may be of interest. Almost every one of our Embassy luncheons, teas, or dinners, no matter how small, was designed to bring together some Argentines and Americans. Because differences between peronistas and their opponents were so great, care had to be taken about invitations. Nevertheless, during this period, the United States Embassy was about the only place where opponents and members of the regime were able to meet under one roof amicably.

An ambassador who dislikes too much protocol and red tape has definite advantages. My experience in business and in cattle-raising helped establish an immediate community of interest with many Argentines, so much so,

in fact, that the days were never long enough to meet all the people it would have been interesting to know.

Members of the Embassy staff were encouraged to get to know Argentines in government, business, and in private circles. An unusual step was to permit Embassy staff members to entertain Argentines in our official home. The Embassy Residence with its staff of seventeen men and five women, all living in the building, had to be paid for anyway, and our Embassy was saved both the higher rentals and the higher prices charged by hotels and clubs. This made their extremely small entertainment allowances go much farther.

Entertaining at the Embassy naturally brought a volume of return invitations to all kinds of Argentine functions. These ranged from high teas to invitations to the *estancias* where a whole steer or sheep was often roasted over the fire. Unfortunately, it was necessary to decline a good many invitations. Not only was there insufficient time but eating the quantity of food put away by many an Argentine was an utter impossibility for any visitors desirous of keeping their health.

We gave important receptions at the Embassy for two visiting United States fleets, one under the command of Admiral McCormick and the other under the command of Admiral Foscett, each with twelve hundred enlisted men. My wife and the wives of the Embassy officials invited a number of young Argentine, American, British and other young ladies to come to the dances. Considering the number of letters we received from the boys and their families when they got home, all had just as good a time being entertained as we had in entertaining them. With this extraordinary number of unattached young

men on leave in one of the world's largest capitals, some feared an unfortunate incident might occur. However, the late General Bertollo, Chief of Police at Buenos Aires, told me afterward: "Never once during the visit of either fleet had I any reason for concern. Your boys conducted themselves with great credit not only to the American Naval service but to their Argentine hosts."

At various times Argentines interested in sports, literature, law, and science were Embassy guests. And we also followed an open door policy at the Embassy offices, receiving practically any Argentine who had business to discuss.

The press of duties was sometimes so great that the only place an Ambassador could find relief was in the Turkish bath near the Embassy offices. Here, sitting in the steam room at midday, I sometimes had an opportunity to talk to all kinds of Argentine businessmen and officials. I recall one particular midday session not long before my departure which has particular significance today.

"You know," one of my Argentine friends said, "wouldn't it be a great idea if in a broader sense the people of our own two countries could come to know one another on the same intimate, friendly basis as we men who gather here. Here we can be completely natural. Here we've come to know, to like, to get along with each other. If we could do the same in our other relations maybe the hemisphere and the world would be a happier place. And the things which perplex both of us might soon disappear."

On reflection, I think my Argentine *amigo* could not have been more right.

Index

- Abrazo*, defined, 30
 Acción Argentina, 102
 Acción Católica Argentina, 183
 Ackerman, Carl W., 206
Acopiador, 136-37
 Administración Nacional de La Vivienda (National Housing Administration), 79
 Adult education, 153-54
Aftosa (foot-and-mouth disease), 241-42
 Aged, homes for the, 187
 Agencia Latina, 208
 Agricultural attaché, United States, 345
 Agricultural export, 120
Aguinaldo, 158
 Air Force, Argentine, 303
 Air travel, 83
 Alberdi, 90
 Alexander, Robert J., quoted, 184
 Alianza Libertadora Nacional, 198, 303
 Aloe, Governor Carlos, 193
 Alvear, Marcelo T. de, quoted, 7
 Ambassador: duties of, 343-49
 and Argentina's economic activities, 344-46
 and commercial relations, 346-47
 and the press, 346
 social life of, 347-49
 American Federation of Labor, and Perón, 156
 American schools, in Argentina, 190-91
 Amusements, Argentine, 212-34
 Andes Mountains, 119
 Andrea, Monseñor Miguel de, 182-83
 Antarctica, Chilean-Argentine dispute, 321
 Anti-Semitism, after military coup of 1943, 111-12
 Apartments, 65-68
 Apold, Raul, quoted on films, 226
 Appearance, of *porteños*, 47-50
 Arabs, in Argentina, 112
 Architects, 72
 Architecture, of Rosario, 91
 Argentina: dependence on foreign markets and supplies, 10
 and leadership in Latin America, 10, 315-19
 and neighboring countries, 314-31
 richness of, 12
 and United States, 332-49
 Argentine character, the, 1-39
 Argentine Corporation of Meat Producers (C.A.P.), 238-39
 Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Exchange (I.A.P.I.), 239, 241
 Argentines: anti-United States, 342
 and democracy, 13
 differences from North Americans, 2-4
 interest in international affairs, 18-19, 38-39
 living conditions of, 65-79
 origins of, 98-116
 pro-United States, 340-42
 reaction to books about Argentina, 42-43
 similarities with North Americans, 4-5
 Argentine-Uruguayan *fútbol* championship, 212-13

- Argentinidad*, defined, 9
 Argument, Argentines' love of, 28-29
 Arias, Pepe, 26
 Aristocracy, Argentine, 126
 Armour Laboratories, 256-57
 Army, Argentine, 300-313
 and Evita Perón, 311
 and government, 301
 and organized labor, 312
 support of Perón, 310, 312
 Asociación de Difusión Inter-americana, 338
 Asociación Filarmónica Argentina, 230
 Asociación Wagneriana, 230
 Associated Press, 336, 337
 Association of Argentine Writers, 289
 Atomic research, 308
 Austral Bloc, 315-16
 Automobile Club, 222
 Automobiles, American, 257, 334
 Avellaneda, 88
 Avenida 9 de Julio, 85-86, 87

 Baccarat, at Mar del Plata, 218
 Bahía Blanca, 95, 119
 Baillieu, Sir Clive, 106
 Banco Central de la República, 249
 Banco de la Nación, 84, 274
 Banco de Londres, 105
 Banking, 249-50
 Bariloche, 220
 Barrio Norte, 69
 Basketball, 214
 Beaches, at Mar del Plata, 218-20
 Beals, Carlton, quoted, 30
 Beauty parlors, 76
 Beer, Bemberg, 260
 Beggars, few in Argentina, 185
 Bemberg, Otto Sebastian, 260-61
 Bertollo, General Arturo, 349
Bidou, 27
 Birth rate, 113
 Bolivia, 314, 317, 321-23
 Argentine interest in, 319
 Bolivian Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, 323
 Bonus, Christmas (*aguinaldo*), 158
 Book-of-the-Month club (*El Libro del Mes*), 209-10
 Book publishing, 203, 209-10
 Book-reading, in Argentina, 15-16
 Born, J., 259
 Bossism, 265
 Bracker, Milton, 206
 Brazil, 314, 325-26
 British influence in Argentina, 104-8
 British investments, in Argentina, 251-52
 British-owned railroads, 107, 250-51
 Buenos Aires, 40 ff., 80-88
 health of, 56
 history of, 82-83
 Buenos Aires Cathedral, 174
 Building, 69-72, 86, 259
 Bunge, Alejandro H., 77
 Bunge, E. A., 259
 Bunge and Born, 259-60
 Business: and Constitution of 1949, 269
 U. S., and Argentina, 340
 Business habits, 152

Cachada, 43
 Cadet training, 304-5
 Cafés, 43-45
 Caldwell, General C. H., 344
 Campo de Mayo, 310
 Cantilo, José María, quoted, 14
 Carcano, Dr. Abel, 288-89

- Career advancement, in business and politics, 151-52
- Carril, Hugo del, 233
- Cartoon strips, American, in Argentina, 337
- Casa Rosada, 84
- Castillo, President Ramon S., 197, 216, 255, 291, 307
- Castro, Americo, 209
- Castro, Juan José, 230
- Catamarca, 177
- Cathedral of Buenos Aires, 84, 174
- Cathedral of Córdoba, 177
- Catholic Church. *See* Roman Catholic Church
- Cattle, 120, 235 ff.
- Cattle industry, and the *estancia* system, 129
- Cattle products, 90
- Cattle show, 235-36
- Caudillo, 125, 141, 144, 279
- Caudillismo, 265
- Censorship, book, 210
- Censorship, 337
- Chacerero, 135-36
- Chaco Territory, 119, 120, 270-71
- Chaco War, 325
- Chacra, 127
- Charity, 184-85
- Chemin de fer*, at Mar del Plata, 218
- Chevalier, Maurice, 114
- Children, and Constitution of 1949, 269
- Children's Town, 187-88
- Chile, 314, 317, 318, 319-21
Argentine interest in, 319
official Argentine relations with, 320-21
- Christ of the Andes, 314, 319
- Christian Science Monitor*, quoted, 208-9
- Church, the. *See* Roman Catholic Church
- Church and State, in Argentina, 178 ff.
- Church support, 178
- Church weddings, 165
- Cities, Argentine (except Buenos Aires), 89-97
- Citizenship, Argentine, for foreigners, 249
- Ciudad de Mexico department store, 187
- Clarín* (government newspaper), 289-90
- Climate, of Argentina, 118-19
- Club Universitaria Argentina Norteamericano, 341
- Clubs, 221-23
- Cocktails, 224
- Codovilla, Victor, 297-98
- Colección Austral* (pocket-books), 209
- Colegio Militar, 304-5
- Collective bargaining, first agreement signed, 155
- Colón. *See* Teatro Colón
- Colonos*, 133-38
- Commerce, United States-Argentine, 340-41
- Commercial failures, 263
- Commercial schools, 192
- Communist Party, 293-99
- Communists, 180
- Communting, from Buenos Aires, 74
- Concerts, 230
- Confederation of Labor, 154
- Confederation of Rural Societies, 238
- Confiterías*, 45
- Congress, and Perón, 271
- Congressional Library, 203
- Conservatives, 290-91
- Constituent Assembly of 1951, 270

- Constitution of 1853, 268
 Constitution of 1949, 266-67, 268-71
 Constitutional Assembly of 1949, 268-70
 Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, Office of, 6
 Copello, Luis Cardinal, 180, 181
 Córdoba, 91-94, 220
 Córdoba Cathedral, 177
 Córdoba University, 197-98
 Corruption, in government, 274-76
 Cosmetics, 333-34
 Cost of living, 159
 Coup d'état of 1943, 19-20
 Cowles, Fleur, 144, 186
 quoted, 184
Criollo, 99
 defined, 98
 Crittenberger, Willis D., 313
 Crow, Carl, 8

 Dale Carnegie courses, 153
 Dana Perfumes, 342
 Debating, Argentines' love of, 29
 Decentralization, of housing in Buenos Aires, 78-79
 Deception Island, 321
Democracia, 159, 188, 317
 Democracy, in Argentina, 13
 in Uruguay, 329
 Demonstrations, in Plaza de Mayo, 85
 Department of Labor, 155
Descamisados, 155, 157, 282
 "Descartes," Perón's pen name, 317, 326
Deutsche La Plata Zeitung (Nazi newspaper), 336
Dignidad, 22-26
 Divorce, 170, 175, 180
Don Segundo Sombra (Guiraldes), 146
 Donovan, Colonel S. J., 345

 Drinking, social, 223
 Drought, 159, 240
 Drug production, 256-57
 Duels, 24
 Dutra, President Gaspar, 326

 Earthquake of 1861, in Mendoza, 94-95
 Easter Week, 181-82
 "Ecclesiastical advisers," 181
 Economic crisis of 1952, 160, 240
 Economic interdependency, Argentine and North American, 2-3
 Editorial Haynes, 107
 Editors Press Service, 336-37
 Education, 15, 189-201
 adult, 153-54
 and Constitution of 1949, 269
 free and compulsory, 191
 primary, 191-92
 religious, 194
 rural, 193
 secondary, 192
 technological, 154
 university, 194-201
El Ciudadano, 157
El Hogar, 107
El Libro del Mes (Book-of-the Month club), 209-10
El Mundo, 107, 336
El Pais (Uruguayan opposition newspaper), 327
 Employment, in foreign-owned business firms, 247-49
 Escuela Experimental Carrasco, 90
 Espejo, José, 157
 Esquin, Friar Mamerto, 177
Estancias, 123, 237
Estancieros, 99, 104, 125-32
 and Perón, 62, 129
 Eva Perón, province of, 121
 Eva Perón Foundation, 158

- Family, the, in Argentina, 161-172
 Farm mechanization, 240-41
 Farrell, General Edelmiro, 206
 "Father rule," 162
 Federación de la Industria de la Carne, 155
 Federation of Catholic Workers Associations, 183
 Filippo, Father Virgilio, 181
 Finance, Argentine, and British influence, 105
 Financial nationalization, 249-50
 Finocchietto, Dr. Ricardo, 289
 First National Bank of Boston, 85
 Food, *porteños* love of, 54-55
 Foot-and-mouth disease (*aftosa*), 241-42
 Foreign banks, 249
 Foreign investments, withdrawn, 259
 Foreign investors, 249, 254
 Fortalit, 263
 Foscett, Admiral James H., 348
 Franco, Francisco, 103, 104
 Frank, Waldo, quoted, 91, 124
 French influence in Argentina, 114-15
 Fruit, 120
Fuero, 272, 273-74
 Funerals, 51
Futbol (soccer), 212-14

 Gainza Paz, Alberto, 328
Gallegos, 102
 Gambling, 215-17
 Garay, Juan de, 82
Garçonnières, 68
 Gardel, Carlos, 232
 Gardens, 75-76
 Gasoline, 96
 Gauchos, 124, 139-46
 character of, 142-43
Gaacho caudillo, 265

 General Confederation of Labor, 148, 185-86, 204, 207, 270, 293
 General Pistarini Airport, 83
 Germans, in Argentina, 109-10
 Ghioldi, Rodolfo, 298
 Gimnasia y Esgrima (Fencing) Club, 221
 Girls, Argentine, 163-64
 Golf, at Mar del Plata, 220
Golondrinas, 101
 González Videla, President Gabriel, 320, 321
 Good Neighbor Policy, 317
 Goodyear Company, 257
 Government, Argentine, 264-76
 Graft, 274-76
 Graham Land, 321
 Grain, product of the *pampa*, 118
 Grain crisis of 1948, 106-7
 Grasses, for cattle, 237-38
 Grasslands, 119
 Greenup, Ruth and Leonard, 21
 quoted, 169
 Greenwich Island, 321
 Grooming, 192-93
 Grupo Oficiales Unidos (G.O.U.), 303, 306
 Guillermo Piazza, Luis, 92, 93-94
 Guiraldes, Ricardo, 146

 Handicrafts, 151
 Harrod's, 88
 Hernandez, José, 145
 Herring, Hubert, 176
 Hides, 95, 96
 Hirsch, Alfredo, 259
 Hirsch, Baron Maurice de, 111
Hispanidad, theory of, 103
 Hitler, Adolf, 102
 Holidays, paid, 147-49
 Hollywood films, 224-27

- Homestead acts, 128
 Horse racing, 215
 Housing, 65-79
 low-cost, 77-78
 Houssay, Dr. Bernardo A., 199
 Hurlingham Club, 223
- Ibáñez, General Carlos, 320
 Ibarguran, Juana, 285
 Identification *cedula*, 275, 328
 Immigration, 60, 99, 100
 mass, 112-13
 Income tax, 249
 Indians, in Argentina, 124
 Industrial plants, around Buenos Aires, 87-88
 Industrial workers, 151, 152, 153
 Industrialists, 52
 and Perón, 62
Industrialización, 246-47
 Industrialization, 257-59
 Perón's program, 240
 Industry, 150-51, 244-63
 and holidays, 149
 rapid expansion of, 259
 Inflation, 158
 "Inflexible austerity" program, 242-43
 Institute for the Promotion of Exchange (I.A.P.I.), 274
 Instituto Cultural Argentino-Norteamericano, 341
 Intellectual achievement, of Argentines, 17
 Intellectuals, 60-61
 Intendencia Municipal, 84
 International Conference of the American States, 316
 International Economic Conference, Moscow, 298
 International News Service, 336, 337
 International relations, Argentine, 38-39
- International Telephone & Telegraph, 255
 International trade, 159
 Investment, in Argentine industry, 247
 foreign, 247
 Irish, in Argentina, 108
 Isherwood, Christopher, 122
 Italian movies, 227
 Italians, in Argentina, 95, 100-102
 Ivanissevich, Dr. Oscar, 287
- Jazz, Argentines' opinion of, 233
 Jewish Colonization Association, 111
 Jews, in Argentina, 110-12
 Jockey Club, 129, 215, 221-22
 library of, 204
 Judiciary branch of government, 270
Justicialismo, 289-90
- Kavanagh Building, 70
 Kelly, Frank, 293
 "Key money," 73
 Kilgore, Harley, 109
- La Bahía de Silencio* (Mallea), 210
La Hora (Communist daily), 297
La Mañana (Uruguayan pro-government newspaper), 327
La Nación, 204, 205, 209, 336
 La Pampa territory (now province of Eva Perón), 121
 La Plata, 95-96
La Prensa, 103-4, 204-8, 336
 and Perón, 206-8
La Razón de Mi Vida (Eva Perón), 194, 210, 280
La Vanguardia, 293
 La Virgen de la Valle, 177

- Labor: and the Army, 312
 laws, 154
 and Perón government, 156-57
 statistics, 149-50
 Lamarque, Libertad, 233
 Land, in Argentina, 117-24
 types of, described, 118-19
 Language, of *porteños*, 56
 Latin American Labor Confederation, 1952, 331
 Lebanese, in Argentina, 112
 Legalism, 271-72
 Libraries, 203-4
 Lincoln Library, 339
 Livestock, product of the *pampa*, 118
 Lomas de Zamora, 88
 Lotteries, run by mortgage institutions, 74
 Lottery, 215-16
 Love affairs, husbands', 168-69

 MacDonald, Austin F., quoted, 309
 MacLeish, Archibald, quoted, 123-24
 Magazines, 338
 Maipo Theater, 228
 Mallea, Eduardo, 210
Mañana, 35-36
 Manufactures, in Argentina, 246
 Mar del Plata, 96-97, 216-20
 Marriage, 164-66, 167-68
 and Constitution of 1949, 269
 inter-American, 170
 Marshall, Nini, 26-27, 226
 Marshall, Secretary of State George, 343
Martín Fierro (Hernandez), 144-46
Maté, 27, 144
 McCormick, Admiral L. D., 348
 Meat, 90, 96, 235-43
 Meat-packing, 253-54
 Mechanization, farm, 240-41

 Medrano, Luis, 26
 Men, Argentine, attitude toward North American wives, 170-71
 Mendoza, 94-95, 119, 120, 121
 Mendoza, Pedro de, 82
 Menendez, José, 126-27
 Merchant Marine, nationalized, 255
Mestizos, defined, 98, 99
 Middle class, 58-64, 99-100
 intellectuals, 60-61
 non-intellectuals, 61
 and Perón, 62, 64
 Middleman (*acopiador*), 136-37
 Migrant workers, 138
 Military coup of 1943, 19-20
 Military government: and air travel, 83
 and foreign business, 248-49
 and nationalization, 254-55
 and the opera, 230
 Military rule, 306-8
 Mineral resources, 119
 Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, 286
 Ministry of National Defense, 312-13
 Ministry of Public Works, 87
 Miranda, Carmen, 325
 Miranda, Miguel, 113, 274, 311
 Misiones, 120
 Mistresses, 169
 Mitre, Bartolomé, 104, 178
 Mitre law, and railroads, 251
 Molina Campos, Florencio, 139-40
 Molinari, Senator Diego, 185
 Money, 262-63
 porteño attitude toward, 46
 presidential authority to coin, 269
 Movies, 224-27, 335
Mundo, El. See El Mundo
Mundo Argentina, 107

- Municipal Library, 203
 Music, 228-33
 popular, 230-31
 Musical societies, 230
 Mussolini, Benito, 102
 Mustache, Argentine, 143
- Nahuel Huapí National Park, 220
 National Central Hospital, 287
 National Commission of Peoples
 Libraries, 204
 National Housing Administration,
 79
 National Institute of Social Se-
 curity, 155
 National Library, 203
 National Register of Intellectual
 Property, 203
 Nationalization: of economy, 261-
 63
 of finance, 249-50
 of railroads, 251
 of utilities, 294
 Navy, Argentine, 303
 Nazi influence, in Argentina,
 109-10
 in Army, 19, 305
 Negroes, in Argentina, 11, 112
 Neutrality, 9, 301, 307
 Newspapers, 204-9, 336
 News services, 336-37
 Night schools, adult, 153
 Normal schools, 192
 Nylon, 335
- Odria, General Manuel, 331
 O'Higgins Land, 321
 Oil, 95, 256
 Old people, rights of, 269
 Olivos, 74, 76
 Olivos Club, 223
 Ombu tree, 122
 Ona Indians, 127
 Opera Colón, 228-30
 Opposition, to Perón, 278
- Ortega y Gasset, José, 33, 209
 quoted, 34
 Ortiz, President Roberto M., 197,
 291
 Oster, Jorge, 260
- Pack, Dr. George, 289
 Packing-house workers, and col-
 lective bargaining, 155
 Palacios, Dr. Alfredo, 198-99,
 292
 Palmolive, 334
Pampa, the, 117-24
 products of, 118
 Pan-American games, 214
 "Papa Perón," 162
 Paraguay, 314, 317, 323-25
 Argentine interest in, 319
 Paraguay River, 323
 Paraguayan Central Railroad, 324
 Paraná River, 82, 90, 119
 Pari-mutuel gambling, 215
 Partido Peronista, 289
 Patagonia, 95, 105, 119, 120
 Patronato de Leprosos, 184
 Paz Estensoro, President Victor,
 323
- Peons*, 99, 108, 133, 137-38
 Peon, Statute of the, 138
 Perfumes, used widely in Argen-
 tina, 50
- Perón, María Eva Duarte de, 23,
 168, 183, 233, 261, 280-89,
 334
 adopts nickname of Evita, 23
 and Social Aid Foundation,
 185-88
 and Argentine films, 226
 audience with Pope, 285
 in Paris, 285-86
 and Ministry of Labor and
 Social Welfare, 286
 and vice presidency, 287-88
 declining health, 287-89
 death of, 85, 289

- Perón, President Juan Domingo,
 13, 36-37, 84, 144, 233, 256,
 261, 279-80, 305, 306-7
 and the Army, 288, 301, 308-
 13
 and British railroads, 107, 251
 and the Church, 180-81
 and the Communists, 297
 and confederation of Latin-
 American states, 317-18,
 326-27
 and control of polls, press,
 radio, 204, 278
 and democratic republicanism,
 271
 economic plans, 159
 and education, 192
 and the *estancieros*, 62
 and foreign investments, 252
 and Franco influence in Argen-
 tina, 104
 and immigration, 100, 112-13
 and the industrialists, 62
 and industrialization, 240, 257-
 59
 on inflation, 158
 "inflexible austerity" program,
 242-43
 and the Jews, 111-12
 and the Jockey Club, 221
 and *La Prensa*, 206-8
 and labor, 148, 155
 and meat, 240, 242-43
 and the middle class, 62, 64
 and political advancement,
 151-52
 and re-establishment of rela-
 tions with Russia, 297
 second term, 287
 and the Socialists, 293
 and South American military
 coups, 316, 323
 and South American neighbor-
 ing states, 322-23, 326, 330
 and tax on foreign books, 210
- Perón, President Juan Domingo,
 (*Cont'd*)
 and telephone system, 255
 and trade unions, 155
 and United States, 279-80
 and the universities, 199
 and the worker, 62, 78, 149
See also Perón, María Eva
 Duarte de
- Perón regime: and the Church,
 182-83
 and the land, 127-30
 and trades union, 156-57
- Peronism, 289-90
Peronismo, 183-84
 Peronista labor militia, 157
 Peronista Party, 76, 281
 Peronista Women's Party, 76
 Peru, 331
 Philanthropy, 184-85
Picardia, 21-22
Piropo, 30-32
 Playa Grande, Mar del Plata, 219
 Playa Popular, Mar del Plata, 218
 Plaza de la República, 86
 Plaza de Mayo, 83-85
 Pocket-books (*Colección Austral*),
 209
- Politics, 277-99
 and students, 195-96, 198
 Polo, 215
 Polyclínico Presidente Perón, 289
 Pond's soap, 334
 Popular music, 230-1
 Population increase, in Argen-
 tina, 114
Porteños, 40-57
 Ports: Bahía Blanca, 95
 La Plata, 96
 Powers, Joshua, 336
Prensa, *La*. *See La Prensa*
 President of Argentina, powers of,
 266-67, 269-70
 Presidente Perón Province, 270
 President's term of office, 268

- Primary education, 191-92
 Professors, university, opposed to military regime, 197
 Prostitution, 183
 Prussian training, and the Army, 303, 305
 Public housing project, 79
 Publishing, book, 209-10
 Punta del Este, 328

Quebracho, 119, 120

 Radical Party, 271, 292
 Radio Belgrano, 234
 Railroads, 250-53, 273
 Rambla, the, boardwalk at Mar del Plata, 220
 Ramírez, General Pedro P., 155, 179-80
 Ramos, Patricio Peralta, 96
 Ray, Guy, 343
 Reading matter, Argentine, 202-11
 Refrigeration, and meat business, 237, 238
 Refugees, from Nazi Germany to Argentina, 109
 Religious education, 180-81, 194
 Rennie, Ysabel, quoted, 63
 Río de la Plata, 82
 Río Negro, 120
 Río Paraná, 90
 Río Primo, 91
 Rivadavia, General Bernardino, 95, 178, 185
 Roads, 122
 Roman Catholic Church, 173-88
 Rooney, Mickey, 226
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 36, 291
 Rosario, 90-91
 Rosas, Juan Manuel de, 125, 141, 144
 Roulette, at Mar del Plata, 217
 Rural education, 193

 Russia: influence in Latin America, 295-96
 diplomatic relations re-established with, 297
 pogroms of Alexander III, and Argentine immigration, 110

 Sabato, Ernesto, quoted, 34, 272
 San Martín, General José de, 84, 94, 309
 Sandrini, Luis, 26
 Santiago del Estero, 121
 Sarmiento, President Domingo Faustino, 143-44, 178, 190
 Sarrata, Casimir Lanús, 342
 Schools, American, in Argentina, 190-91
 Scottish immigrants, 105
 Secondary education, 192
 Sense of humor, Argentine, 43
 Servants, 66
 Sharecropper (*chacrerero*), 135-36
 Sheep, 119, 120, 127
 Sherbinin, Betty de, quoted, 153
 Shipping, 255
 Shopping, in suburbs, 76
 Shops, in Buenos Aires, 50-51, 87, 88
Simpático, 36
 defined, 4
 Skiing, 220
 Skyscrapers, 70, 86-87
 Slums, few in Buenos Aires, 77
 Smith, Willard and Verna, 324
 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, 241-42
 Social Aid Foundation, 185-88
 Socialism, 261
 Socialist Party, 271, 292-93
 Socialists, 154, 180
 Sociedad de Beneficencia, 185
 Sociedad Rural Argentina, 130, 235-37, 238
 Society, Argentine, attitude toward the Peróns, 37

- Sosa Molina, Humberto, 312-13
 Spaniards, in Argentina: first, 99
 recent, 102-4
 Spanish influence in Argentina, 103-4
 Spoils system, 277-99
 Sports, for girls, 163
 Sportsmanship, 215
Standard, The (English-Argentine daily newspaper), 105
 Statute of the Peon, 138
 Straits of Magellan, 119
 Student strikes, 197-98
 Students, university: exempted from Army service, 306
 opposed to military regime, 198
 Suburban living, 74-76
 Sueyro, Vice-President Admiral Saba H., 52-53
 Sugar, 120
 Syrians, in Argentina, 112
 Tango, 231-33
 Taylor, Dr. Carl, 17
 quoted, 120
 Teatro Colón, 228-30
 Technical schools, 192
 Technological education, 154
 Telephone system, 255
 Television, 233-34
 Tenant farmers, 133-38
 and politics, 134-35
 Tenements, in Buenos Aires, 77
 Tennis, at Mar del Plata, 220
 Textbooks, 193
 Theater: in Argentina, 227-28
 at Mar del Plata, 217
 Thermal springs, in Mendoza, 95
 Tierra del Fuego, 321
 Tigre, 220-21
 Tonsa (shoes), 257
 Toscanini, Arturo, 229
 Totalitarianism, books on, 210
 Tow, Irving and Samuel, 257
 Trade unionists, and Presidente Perón Province, 270
 Traffic conditions, 87, 272
 Transport Corporation, 181
 Tristan (political cartoonist), 26
 Trolley systems, 253
 Truman, President Harry S., 343
 Tucumán, 120
 Tuition, free at national universities, 196
Turcos, in Argentina, 112
 Ultramar, 256
 Unemployment, fear of mass, 263
 Unión Cívica Radical, 291
 Unions, trade, 154, 155
 and Perón government, 156-57
 United Nations Bulletin of Statistics, on labor, 149-50
 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 113-14
 United Press, 205, 336, 337
 United States: and Argentina, 5-6, 332-51
 and Argentine Army, 313
 organized opposition to, 342
 and Russian influence in Latin America, 295
 United States Embassy, in Buenos Aires, 85
 United States Embassy Information Service, 338
 United States influence in Argentina, 115-16, 333 ff.
 University education, 194-201
 University students, and politics, 195-96, 198
 University of Buenos Aires, 199
 University of Córdoba, 93
 University of La Plata, 198

- Unmarried mothers, homes for, 187
- Uriburu, General José Evaristo, 305
- Uruguay, 314, 327-31
 Argentine interest in, 319
 and democracy, 329, 330
 refuge for Argentine political refugees, 328, 330
- Uruguay River, 82, 119
- Uspallata Pass, 314
- Vacation: in Argentina, 220-21
 in Uruguay, 328
- Vargas, President Getulio, 326
- Venezuela, 331
- Voting, control of, 278
- War, and Argentine Army, 301, 307
- Warren, Virginia Lee, 210
- Wast, Hugo, 16
- Weddell, Alexander W., 267
- Wedding, church, 175
- Week-end place (*cama de week-end*), 76
- Weil, Felix, 175
 quoted, 176
- Weishaus, Istaban, 231
- Welsh immigrants, 105
- Wheat, 90, 95, 235-43
- White, John, 231
 quoted, 143
- White supremacy, 11
- White-collar workers, 59, 151, 152, 153
- Wife, the Argentine, 162-63, 166-68, 170
- Wilkinson, Father James, 179-80
- Windsor, Duke of, at Mar del Plata, 218
- Wines, 120, 223-24
- Woman suffrage, 168
- Women, Argentine, 49-50, 167-68
 attitude toward North American husbands, 171-72
 emancipation of, 168
- Wool, 95
- Worker state (Presidente Perón Province), 270
- Workers, 59, 147-60
 and Perón, 62, 158
 productivity of, 149-50
- Workers' housing, 77-79
 and Perón, 78
- Workers' rights and Constitution of 1949, 268-69
- Working girls, homes for, 187
- Workmanship, in building, 71-72
- Wright, Frank Lloyd, 72
- Yachting, 221
- Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales (YPF), 256
- Yerba maté*, 120, 144
- Zapala, 119
- Zawarski, Dr. Helen, 287
- Zuviria, Gustavo Martínez, 16

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